

# **My Free Bible History: The Old Testament**



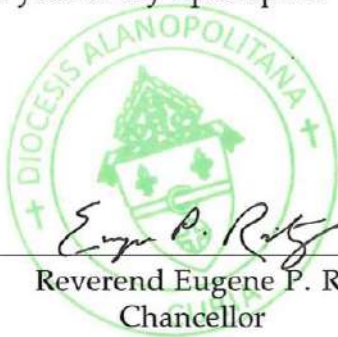
**Egyptian Maid Shows Baby Moses to Pharaoh's Daughter**

Mr. Romeo Maria del Santo Niño, O.P.

*Nihil Obstat:*Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Chaback  
*Censor Librorum**Imprimatur:*Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown

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Given at the Chancery on this sixth day of June, the Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, Diocesan Patroness, in the Year of Our Lord, two-thousand twenty-two, in the fifth year of my Episcopate.



Reverend Eugene P. Ritz  
Chancellor

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Alfred A. Schlert", written over a horizontal line.

Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown

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DEDICATED  
TO  
THE HOLY CHILD JESUS  
AND HIS MOTHER  
MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE

## IMPORTANT NOTICE!

This book of bible stories is not intended for little children. In spite of the numerous pictures and illustrations included with the text, the book is intended for pupils in the upper grades and the adult Catholic who wishes to have a basic knowledge of Bible History, but who is intimidated by, or who has no time to read, the actual Bible. I added bible references, footnotes and short commentaries, so that catechists and bible enthusiasts may find the book useful as well. The book is copyrighted, but FREE. You may freely copy and distribute this book to friends and family, provided no alteration is made, and this notice is kept intact. The sale of this book is strictly prohibited.

The present book may serve as a companion to any catechism of the Catholic Faith. The bible stories contained here are not intended just for entertainment, but are meant to stimulate discussion, as well as to illustrate and reinforce lessons in the catechism.

*My Free Bible History* is not a new translation of the Bible. It is simply a retelling of the same stories contained in Holy Scripture. I used and followed closely the 1899 *Douay-Challoner-Rheims* version of the Bible because this version is in the public domain. However, I updated, abridged, and simplified the text for the modern reader. I avoided old English terms, such as the “thee’s” and the “thou’s,” and I used the modern names that are currently found in most Bibles today. For example, I used *Joshua* instead of *Josue*, *Elijah* instead of *Elias*, *1 & 2 Chronicles* instead of *1 & 2 Paralipomenon*, etc. Likewise, I adopted the numbering of the *Psalms* as found in the newer versions of the Bible. Those who use the newer versions should therefore still be able to use the biblical references given in this book.

In writing this Bible History I kept the stories as close to the original stories of Holy Scripture as possible. Any detail added is intended only to clarify the meaning of the sacred text, not to add drama to the stories. Commentaries (in red texts) are mainly for catechists and bible enthusiasts, although any diligent reader will find them helpful, too. I added them to show how personages and events in the Old Testament prefigure those in the New, and to indicate archaeological data that lend credibility to biblical events. To keep the reader’s focus on the Bible as *history*, I minimized the discussion of moral and catechetical lessons in the commentary. Those who are looking for an extensive exposition of moral and religious truths from the Bible will find plenty of them in the excellent work of Bishop Frederick Justus Knecht (see link next page).



Most of the pictures and illustrations used here are believed to be in the public domain here in the U.S. However, there are a few copyrighted ones that I took the liberty of using based on the concept of “fair use,” as defined by Title 17, U.S. Code §107 for educational and non-commercial purposes. Picture credits and a link to their sources and license are given at the end of the book.

Although I made this book as a lay Dominican, this book is my personal project and not the project of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic. Therefore, any error, omission, or legal infraction that may be detected in this book is solely my responsibility and does not in any way implicate the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic or the Order of Preachers as a whole.

## USEFUL LINKS

*New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE)* - from the USCCB website.

This Bible contains the text of Holy Scripture in modern English. It also has an expanded introductory material and an extensive set of footnotes based on recent biblical research.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible>

*Douay-Challoner-Rheims (DCR) Bible with Haydock's Commentary*

This is the classic English translation of St. Jerome's *Biblia Vulgata*, and uses old-style English. The Haydock commentary is a collection of timeless commentary by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and by other renowned Catholic scholars. On top of each page is a menu which contains a tab for the Old Testament and a tab for the New Testament. The text of Holy Scripture is on the right column of each page, and the Haydock commentary is on the left, which makes it neat and easy to use. Both the DCR Bible and the Haydock Commentary are in the public domain.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161013003500/http://haydock1859.tripod.com/index.html>

*A Practical Commentary on Holy Scripture*, by Frederick Justus Knecht, D.D.

An excellent resource for those who teach Bible History in the secondary schools. This commentary is based on the text of the DCR Bible, and is also in the public domain.

<https://www.ecatholic2000.com/knecht/untitled-198.shtml>

*Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation – copyrighted but free for educational use.

<http://gregoryblvdcc.org/Bible%20Maps/Bible%20Atlas%20Online%20by%20Access%20Foundation.htm>

*Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):*

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM)

## BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

There are 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, for a total of 73 books.

### OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

Book	Abbrev.	Book	Abbrev
Genesis	Gen	Song of Songs ( <i>Canticles</i> )	Sg
Exodus	Ex	Wisdom	Wisd
Leviticus	Lev	Sirach ( <i>Ecclesiasticus</i> )	Sir
Numbers	Num	Isaiah ( <i>Isaias</i> )	Isa
Deuteronomy	Deut	Jeremiah ( <i>Jeremias</i> )	Jer
Joshua ( <i>Josue</i> )	Jos	Lamentations	Lam
Judges	Jgs	Baruch	Bar
Ruth	Ruth	Ezekiel ( <i>Ezechiel</i> )	Ez
1 Samuel ( <i>1 Kings</i> )	1 Sam	Daniel	Dan
2 Samuel ( <i>2 Kings</i> )	2 Sam	Hosea ( <i>Osee</i> )	Hos
1 Kings ( <i>3 Kings</i> )	1 Kgs	Joel	Joel
2 Kings ( <i>4 Kings</i> )	2 Kgs	Amos	Am
1Chronicles ( <i>1 Paralipomenon</i> )	1 Chr	Obadiah ( <i>Abdias</i> )	Ob
2 Chronicles ( <i>2 Paralipomenon</i> )	2 Chr	Jonah ( <i>Jonas</i> )	Jon
Ezra ( <i>1 Esdras</i> )	Ezr	Micah ( <i>Micheas</i> )	Mi
Nehemiah ( <i>2 Esdras</i> )	Neh	Nahum	Nah
Tobit ( <i>Tobias</i> )	Tob	Habakkuk ( <i>Habacuc</i> )	Hab
Judith	Jdt	Zephaniah ( <i>Sophonias</i> )	Zep
Esther	Esth	Haggai ( <i>Aggeus</i> )	Hg
Job	Job	Zechariah ( <i>Zacharias</i> )	Zec
Psalms	Ps	Malachi ( <i>Malachias</i> )	Mal
Proverbs	Prov	1 Maccabees ( <i>1 Machabees</i> )	1 Macc
Qoheleth ( <i>Ecclesiastes</i> )	Qo	2 Maccabees ( <i>2 Machabees</i> )	2 Macc

The names given in the table are those used in most modern versions of the Bible. The names in italics and in parentheses are the names used in the old Douay-Challoner-Rheims version. The books highlighted in yellow are regarded by Protestants as apocryphal, and are therefore missing in the Protestant canon. The book of Daniel is not missing, but Daniel 3:24-90, as well as Chapters 13 and 14, are missing.

Some old Bibles combine Jeremiah and Lamentations into one book, thus ending with a total of only 45 books in the Old Testament.

## NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

Book	Abbrev.	Book	Abbrev.
Matthew	Matt	1 Timothy	1 Tim
Mark	Mark	2 Timothy	2 Tim
Luke	Luke	Titus	Tit
John	John	Philemon	Phlm
The Acts of the Apostles	Acts	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jas
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	2 Peter	2 Pet
Galatians	Gal	1 John	1 John
Ephesians	Eph	2 John	2 John
Philippians	Phil	3 John	3 John
Colossians	Col	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Thes	Revelation ( <i>Apocalypse</i> )	Rev
2 Thessalonians	2 Thes		

### How Passages in the Bible Are Referenced

All books of the Bible are divided into chapters, and every sentence, called a verse, is numbered. When a passage or text is quoted from the Bible, the author will usually give the name of the book, the chapter, and the verse number. Frequently, only the abbreviation, rather than the full name of the book, is given. The verse is separated from the chapter by a colon (:). For example, consider the following:

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land” (Matt 5:3-4).*

The symbol at the end of the quotation, Matt 5:3-4, indicates that the text was taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 3 thru 4.



**Fig 1 Jacob's Dream**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

Frontispiece

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# **My Free Bible History: The Old Testament**

## *Part One The Age of the Patriarchs*

## CHAPTER 1 THE STORY OF ADAM AND EVE

### The Creation of the World

(Gen 1:1-31; 2:1-3)



**Fig 1.1.1 God the Father, Creator of the World**

A free photo by Max Pixel, CC0 Public Domain

In the beginning God created<sup>1</sup> heaven and earth. The earth was empty and dark. God said: “Let there be light.” And light was made. God saw that the light was good. He separated the light from the darkness. He called the light Day and the darkness Night. That was the **first** day. (Gen 1:1-5)

Then God said, “Let there be a firmament<sup>2</sup> to separate the waters above it from the waters below.” And so, it was made. He called the firmament heaven.<sup>3</sup> That was the **second** day. (Gen 1:6-8)

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<sup>1</sup> God did not make the world out of things that existed, but *out of nothing*. See 2 Macc 7:28.

<sup>2</sup> Based on old science, this firmament was understood to be a dome in the sky. But in the context, it includes everything above the sky.

<sup>3</sup> The word “heaven” (with a lower-case “h”) does not refer to God’s dwelling place, which is spiritual, but to His material creation in and beyond the sky.

God also said, “Let the waters that are under heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” It was done. God called the dry land Earth, and the bodies of water He called Seas. Then He said, “Let the earth bring forth the green plants and fruit trees that produce seeds according to their kind,<sup>4</sup> so that they would fill the earth.” It was done. Green plants and fruit trees appeared on the earth, and God saw that it was good. That was the **third** day. (Gen 1:9-13)

Then God said, “Let there be lights made in the sky to separate the day and the night.” It was done. God made two great lights - a greater light (the sun) to rule the day and a lesser light (the moon) to rule the night, and the stars. God saw that it was good. That was the **fourth** day. (Gen 1:14-19)

God also said: “Let the waters bring forth the fish in the sea, and let birds fly over the earth under heaven.” God created the great whales, and every living creature in the sea, according to their kinds. He also created every bird that fly over the earth, according to its kind. God saw that it was good. That was the **fifth** day. (Gen 1:20-23)

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth different kinds of living beings, cattle, land animals, and beasts of the earth, according to their kinds.” And it was done. Finally, He said, “Let us make man *in our image and likeness*, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts, the whole earth, and every land animal that moves upon the earth.” Male and female He created them. Then He blessed them, saying, “Increase and multiply, and fill the earth.” God gave man and the beasts all the vegetation for food. He saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good. That was the **sixth** day. (Gen 1:24-31)

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<sup>4</sup> “According to their kind” means that plants and trees produce only their own kind of seed. Apple trees only produce apple seeds, not pear seeds. And pear trees only produce pear seeds, not apple seeds.



On the **seventh** day God rested from all His work, blessed the seventh day and *sanctified* it. (Gen 2:1-3)



**Fig 1.1.2 Paradise – God’s Creation on Earth**

Artist: Jan Brueghel the Younger (1601-1678)

## COMMENTARY

1. Modern science says that it took almost 14 billion years for the universe to form from the onset of the “big bang” to its present state. Yet the Bible says that God created the world in only 6 days. There is apparently a conflict here between science and the text of Holy Scripture. In the attempt to force an agreement between the text of Genesis and the data of modern science, some scholars suggest that in the Bible the Hebrew word “yom” (commonly translated as “day” in English) does not always represent a 24-hour period, but is sometimes used to designate “an unspecified period of time.” Thus, according to this view, the six “days” of creation do not necessarily represent just six days, but six *stages* of creation, with each stage taking possibly millions of years. However, it is not necessary to apply this unfamiliar meaning of the word “yom” to the text of Holy Scripture just to force an agreement between science and religion. The honest truth is that the human writer of Genesis used the word “yom” in the literal sense that most ordinary people understand by the word: a 24-hour day. By showing how God made the world in 6 days, and on the seventh day He rested, the sacred writer was teaching the people the value of *sanctifying the Sabbath*, not the timetable of cosmic evolution. He was teaching them *religion*, not science.
2. The ultimate Author of Holy Scripture is the Holy Spirit. So, the Bible cannot contain any errors. This is known as “biblical inerrancy.” This means that the Bible is infallible, not in all its scientific and historical details, but *in what the Holy Spirit wants to teach for the sake of our salvation* (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Ch. III, #11). For example, the Bible teaches that the world did not make itself, and that God is the origin of all things, including man. The Bible cannot be wrong on that, because it is important for the sake of our salvation to know that we are not a haphazard product of evolution, and that we owe our being to God. However, whether the world was formed in 6 days or 14 billion years, or whether the green plants were created before the sun and the moon, are details that do not matter to our eternal salvation. Such details do not fall under the scope of biblical infallibility and are, therefore, not exempt from error. However, the necessity of sanctifying the Sabbath matters to our salvation, and must therefore be regarded as an infallibly revealed truth.



## The Creation of the Angels

The story of the creation and fall of the angels is not part of the *Book of Genesis*, but is given before the story of Adam and Eve, to explain the existence of the devil (a fallen angel) in Paradise. It also helps to explain where the angels came from, whom God placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden when He cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise after their fall.

Besides the earth, God also created an invisible world, called Heaven (with a capital H). In it He placed the angels, which are immortal spirits. The angels are intelligent, powerful, and purely spiritual creatures. They really have no wings nor material figure because they have no bodies. But artists draw them with wings and human form to help our imagination. The wings remind us that angels frequently act as God's messengers.

Angels differ from each other in power, wisdom and dignity according to their rank or office. There are nine ranks of angels mentioned in the Bible. These are the Seraphim,<sup>5</sup> the Cherubim,<sup>6</sup> the Thrones,<sup>7</sup> the Dominations (or Dominions), the Virtues, the Powers, the Principalities,<sup>8</sup> the Archangels<sup>9</sup> and the Angels.<sup>10</sup>

In the beginning these angels were good and beautiful. But later some of them became so proud of their intelligence, beauty and power, that they decided that they would not obey God anymore. The leader of these rebellious angels was Satan. He was one of the most gifted and powerful angels, but he rebelled against God. However, Saint Michael and the other

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<sup>5</sup> Mentioned in Isa 6:1-7.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Gen 3:24.

<sup>7</sup> See Col 1:16

<sup>8</sup> The Dominions, the Virtues, the Powers and the Principalities are cited in Eph 1:21 and Col 1:16.

<sup>9</sup> The Archangels are mentioned in 1 Thes 4:15.

<sup>10</sup> The angels are found in many places in the Bible, such as in Gen 19, Matt 1:20, and more.



good angels chose to remain faithful to God. Thus, a big battle took place in Heaven. St. Michael and his angels defeated the bad angels and drove them out of Heaven (Rev 12:7-9). As punishment for their evil will, the bad angels lost their beauty and other spiritual gifts, and they now live a life of misery away from God. They are called fallen angels, devils or demons.<sup>11</sup>



**Fig 1.1.3 A Big Battle in Heaven<sup>12</sup>**

From *Catecismo Ilustrado de Pio X*, 1910

<sup>11</sup> Some of these demons, particularly the rebel *principalities* and *powers*, are on earth tempting us to sin (Eph 6:12).

<sup>12</sup> In the above painting the Latin caption “*Quis ut Deus*” means “Who is like God,” which is a translation of the Hebrew name Michael.



**Fig 1.1.4 St. Michael the Archangel<sup>13</sup>**  
Artist: Raphael, or Raffaello Sanzio (1483-1520)

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<sup>13</sup> That St. Michael is an archangel is revealed in Jude 1:9.



## COMMENTARY

1. The Bible did not say exactly why some of the angels rebelled against God. But in a private revelation received from our Lord by Ven. Mary of Agreda (1602-1665), she wrote that the bad angels sinned because of their pride and in two other ways by their disobedience. First, they refused to worship Christ, the God-man, when it was revealed to them that the Son of God would incarnate and become man. Seeing that the human nature is lower than their angelic nature, the bad angels refused to worship Him. Second, they refused to give reverence to Mary, a lowly woman, when it was disclosed to them that she would be the Mother of Christ and, therefore, the Mother of God. These two revelations were too shocking for the bad angels to accept, especially for Satan. These proud and envious angels then became filled with so much hatred for all humanity that they resolved to make war with Mary and all her spiritual children, and devised to oppose God and thwart His plans in every way. See Mary of Agreda, *Mystical City of God*, Vol. 1, Book 1, Ch. VII, # 87-92.
2. The revelations made to Sr. Mary of Agreda are *private* revelations and are NOT part of Holy Scripture or Sacred Tradition. Therefore, they are not dogma that need to be believed by all. Still, the Church in examining her writings found them to be not in conflict with Holy Scripture nor with any of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Therefore, they must be regarded at least as divine hints or intimations of a holy soul, rather than purely speculative opinions.

## The Creation of Adam and Eve

(Gen 1:25-28; 2:7-25)

After making all the plants and trees, fish, birds and beasts on earth, God said, “Let Us make man *in our image and likeness*,<sup>14</sup> and let him rule over the whole earth” (Gen 1:26). So, He formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life,<sup>15</sup> and man became a living being.<sup>16</sup> (Gen 2:7)



**Fig 1.1.5 The Bliss of Paradise**

Artist: Victor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov (1848-1926)

Cathedral of St. Vladimir, Kiev, Ukraine

<sup>14</sup> In creating the rest of the world, God said, “Let it be!” But in creating man He did not merely say, “Let there be man.” Rather, He said, “Let Us make man *in our image and likeness*,” indicating man’s *special* nature compared to the rest of material creation.

<sup>15</sup> The “breath of life” is sometimes called the *soul*. God gave man a spiritual and immortal soul, and it is because of his soul that man is said to be made into God’s image and likeness.

<sup>16</sup> In the Bible the man was named *Adam*. (Gen 2:19 ff)

The Lord God had planted a Paradise, called the Garden of Eden, where He placed Adam. In it He placed two trees. One was the tree of life.<sup>17</sup> The other tree, which was in the middle of the garden, was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam, “Of every tree of Paradise you may eat, but you shall not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for the day you eat of it, you shall die.” (Gen 2:8-9, 16-17)

God said, “It is not good for man to be alone. Let us give Adam a companion.” So, the Lord God brought to him all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, to see what he would call them. Adam gave each animal and each bird a name, but he found no companion like himself. Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam. When Adam was fast asleep, God took one of his ribs, and built it into a woman, and brought her to Adam. When Adam awoke, he said of the woman: “This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.”<sup>18</sup> (Gen 2:18-23)

Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and be attached to his wife. *They shall be two in one flesh.*<sup>19</sup> (Gen 2:24)

Adam and Eve wore no clothes, but were not ashamed.<sup>20</sup> (Gen 2:25)

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<sup>17</sup> The tree of life is an important tree in the Garden of Eden. Its fruit is what keeps Adam and Eve free from sickness and death. For this reason, it is considered to be a type or figure of the Blessed Sacrament. Just as the tree of life preserves the natural life of Adam and Eve, so the Blessed Sacrament preserves and sustains the supernatural life of our souls.

<sup>18</sup> Adam called his wife *Eve*, which means mother of all the living. (Gen 3:20)

<sup>19</sup> “*They shall be two in one flesh.*” This is an important text, because it shows that God from the beginning instituted marriage for the purpose of *procreation*. It is intended to be a union that puts the two (man and wife) in one flesh (the child). Therefore, marriage must be *a union between man and woman*. It cannot be a union between man and another man, or between woman and another woman, because this type of union cannot produce a child.

<sup>20</sup> They were not ashamed because they were innocent. The feeling of shame came only after they had sinned.

## COMMENTARY

1. Do not many scientists claim that the evolution of species is a well-established scientific fact, and that life on earth is the product of evolution rather than creation? Yes, many scientists do claim that, but it is an *exaggerated* claim. Small changes in interbreeding population, sometimes called *micro-evolution*, have indeed been observed in many organisms, and may be regarded as fact. But we are here talking about the phenomenon of *macro-evolution*, or the emergence of big changes, such as new body parts, new organs, new vital systems, etc., in an organism *in which these organs did not previously exist*. This phenomenon has never been observed in nature and is not supported by any evidence at all. Some scientists claim that the fact of micro-evolution points to the occurrence of macro-evolution. That is true, but without the actual observation of the occurrence of big changes – new organs and new vital systems – that could lead to the emergence of a new species, the fact of micro-evolution only proves the *possibility*, but not the *fact*, of macro-evolution.
2. Although macro-evolution is still an unproved hypothesis, it is not impossible for complex organisms, such as plants and brute animals, to evolve from a lower species, since it does not detract from the power and wisdom of the Creator to make use of pre-existing creatures to develop new ones. However, an exception must be made when it comes to man because man has a spiritual soul that cannot evolve from matter. The Bible did not teach that man evolved from lower animals, but that he was specially created by God.
3. Is it not possible for the body of man to evolve, although not the soul? It is possible, but there is good reason to believe that *even the body of man*, and not merely his soul, was especially created by God. The reason for holding this opinion is because man was made into God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26). Granted that this "image and likeness" is primarily in the soul, the truth is that the body also shares in the dignity of the soul. For it is the *whole* man, not just the soul, that was made into God's image and likeness (CCC 364). Therefore, it makes more sense to believe that God formed Adam and Eve, not in the womb of some ape-like ancestor, but directly from the elements of the earth, as the Bible says. If this is the case, then Adam and Eve, and all of humanity, did not descend from a population of non-rational primates, but were specially created by God.



## The Sin of Adam and Eve

(Gen 3:1-24)

Satan, now a devil, was envious of the happiness of Adam and Eve in Paradise. He thought of tempting them to disobey God, too. He appeared in the form of a serpent to talk to the woman. “Why,” he asked, “did God tell you that you should not eat the fruit of every tree of Paradise?” The woman answered, “Of the fruit of the trees that are in Paradise we can eat. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God told us not to eat or touch, lest we die.” The serpent said to the woman, “No, you shall not die. God knows that on the day you eat its fruit, your eyes will be opened, and you shall be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen 3:1-5)



**Fig 1.1.6 The Temptation**

Artist: Victor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov (1848-1926)  
Cathedral of St. Vladimir, Kiev, Ukraine



Eve saw that the tree was good to eat and delightful to behold. She took its fruit and ate, then gave it to Adam, who also ate. Then their eyes were both opened. When they noticed themselves to be naked,<sup>21</sup> they sewed fig leaves, and made themselves aprons to wear. When they heard God walking in the middle of Paradise, Adam and Eve hid themselves. But God called Adam, and said, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:6-9)

Adam answered: “I heard Your voice in Paradise, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.” God said, “Who told you that you were naked? You must have eaten the fruit of the tree which I told you not to eat.” Adam said, “The woman, whom You gave me to be my companion, gave me a fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (Gen 3:10-12)

The Lord God asked Eve, “Why have you done this?” She answered, “The serpent lied to me, and I ate.” God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this thing, upon your breast shall you crawl on the ground, and earth shall you eat all the days of your life. I will put enmities between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: she<sup>22</sup> shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel.” (Gen 3:13-15)

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<sup>21</sup> They felt the shame of their nakedness when they lost their innocence, that is, by disobedience.

<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew pronoun, which refers to “the seed” of the woman (Eve), is ambiguous. If it is taken as masculine, then it refers to Christ and the verse could read as “*He* shall crush your head.” Christ obviously would crush the serpent’s head by His sinlessness. But if the pronoun is taken as feminine, then it refers to the Virgin Mary, and the verse would read as “*She* shall crush your head.” Both interpretations are valid because both Christ and the Virgin Mary are seeds of the woman, Eve. Many of the early Church Fathers read the pronoun as feminine, which is why it was so translated by St. Jerome. In his Papal Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pope Pius IX also said that the Virgin Mary would completely crush the serpent’s head, not just by her personal sinlessness, but by being conceived without sin. Therefore, he declared that the *immaculate conception* of the Virgin Mary, although only implicitly contained in Holy Scripture, was a divinely revealed truth, and must be firmly believed by all.

To Eve He said, “I will multiply your sorrows in child-birth, and you shall be under your husband’s power.” To Adam He said, “Cursed is the earth in your work. Thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you. In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread till you return to the earth from which you were taken. For dust you are, and into dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:16-19)

The Lord God made clothes for Adam and Eve, and cast them out of Paradise. At the entrance of the garden, He placed the cherubim<sup>23</sup> with flaming swords to keep them from coming back to Paradise. (Gen 3:21-24)



**Fig 1.1.7 Adam and Eve Driven from Paradise**  
Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

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<sup>23</sup> Since the word “cherubim” is the plural form of “cherub,” the Bible spoke of not one but *several* angels being placed to guard the entrance of the garden.

## COMMENTARY

1. In his encyclical, *Humani Generis*, # 37, Pope Pius XII admonished Catholics to be careful in applying the evolutionary model to man. As a scientific hypothesis, evolution is often not applied to individuals but to populations. This is why many evolutionists tend to speak of not one, but several pairs of human parents at the beginning of humankind (polygenesis), *each human parent possibly mating with other hominids that are non-human*, prior to the actual emergence of the human species. This kind of bestiality, where a rational being is conceived as mating with non-rational beings, is unavoidable in a scenario where God's intelligence and providence are disregarded or ignored, and the emergence and stability of the human species is left to chance. This is contrary to our faith and it blurs the reality of **original sin** which, according to divine revelation, happened at the dawn of human history. What Holy Scripture revealed in the first chapters of Genesis makes more sense: that Adam and Eve were created in a special way, and with God's providence the entire human race descended from them. When Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise on account of their sin, God did not abandon them altogether, but guided their life on earth in a providential way. For they were the only couple on earth having a human nature that God the Son would later assume as His own.
2. The Bible did not say when exactly Adam and Eve were created. However, it is likely that true humans have been on this planet for no more than 10,000 years. It is true that paleontologists have found human-like fossils dating back to 200,000 years ago. But these are probably fossils only of *hominins*, or creatures with anatomical structures similar to those of humans, but which are not necessarily human. Unless there is evidence that they possessed intelligence *higher* than those possessed by brute animals, then they are not necessarily human. The mere fact that these creatures used tools is no sign of human intelligence, because some brute animals also use tools. Likewise, the fact that these creatures could communicate signs or signals, or could show compassion, or had produced primitive art, is not a decisive evidence that they were human. For these abilities have also been demonstrated by various animals. What is needed is evidence of *abstract thinking*, or their possession of true *language*, because these are truly human achievements not demonstrated by brute animals.



## CHAPTER 2 THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL

(Gen 4:1-16)

Adam and Eve had plenty of children.<sup>24</sup> Two of them were Cain and his brother, Abel. Cain was a farmer, and Abel a shepherd. (Gen 4:1-2)

After many days Cain and Abel both made an offering to God. Abel offered the best of his flock, a fat lamb, and God was very pleased with it. Cain offered the fruits of the earth, but God knew his selfish heart and didn't care for his offering. Cain became angry with his brother. (Gen 4:3-5)



**Fig 1.2.1 The Offerings of Cain and Abel**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

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<sup>24</sup> Although only three children of Adam were named in the Bible (Abel, Cain and Seth), he actually had many sons *and* daughters. (Gen 5:4)

The Lord said to him, “Why are you angry? and why do you look disappointed? If you do well, will you not also receive my favor?” But Cain was not satisfied. (Gen 4:6-7)

One day Cain invited Abel to go out with him to the fields. When they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother and killed him. (Gen 4:8)



**Fig 1.2.2 The Murder of Abel**  
Artist: Palma il Giovane (1550-1628)

The Lord said to Cain “Where is your brother Abel?” Cain answered, “I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen 4:9)

The Lord said to him, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries to Me from the ground. Now therefore cursed shall you be upon the earth. When you till it, it will not yield its fruit to you, and you shall be a fugitive and a vagabond<sup>25</sup> upon the earth.” (Gen 4:10-12)

Cain despaired and said to the Lord, “Oh, my sin is too great to be forgiven!” The Lord set a mark upon Cain that no one would kill him, so that he would remain a fugitive and a vagabond upon the earth. (Gen 4:13-15)

### COMMENTARY

1. When Cain despaired and said, “Oh, my sin is too great to be forgiven,” he committed one of the so-called “blasphemies against the Holy Spirit.” He could have been forgiven, if he had repented and begged God for mercy. The blasphemy is unforgiven, not because of a lack of mercy on God’s part, but because of a lack of confidence in God’s mercy on the sinner’s part.
2. At the same time Cain’s sin is also one of the “sins that cry to God for vengeance,” on account of what the Holy Scripture says about it: “the voice of your brother’s blood cries to Me from the ground.” Indeed, all acts of murder, including abortion, are sins that cry to God for vengeance.
3. Abel is a type of Jesus Christ because he was just and slain by his own brother out of envy. Like Abel, Christ was most just, and slain by his own countrymen out of envy. Cain, who slew his brother out of envy and became a vagabond, is also a type of the Jewish people who slew their God out of envy, and who were later dispersed outside Israel (the *diaspora*).

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<sup>25</sup> A *vagabond* is a wanderer, or a person with no fixed place to live.



## CHAPTER 3 THE STORY OF NOAH - (ca. 2500 B.C.)<sup>26</sup>

### God commands Noah to build an Ark

(Gen 6:5-7:24)

As the descendants of Adam and Eve became numerous, they also became increasingly wicked. Seeing how bad the people had become, God regretted that he had made man on the earth. He said: “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, from man to beasts, to the birds of the air, for I regret that I have made them.” (Gen 6:5-7)

But God found Noah different from the rest of men. Noah was a just and honest man, and always had God in his heart. God said to Noah: “The earth is full of evil because of men, and I will destroy them with the earth. Therefore, make a wooden ark (or ship) and make little rooms in the ark, because I will bring a great flood upon the earth to destroy all living beings under heaven. Make the ark 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high.<sup>27</sup> Put a window in the upper part of the ark, and a door in the side. The ark shall have three floors – first, second and third floor.” (Gen 6:8-16)

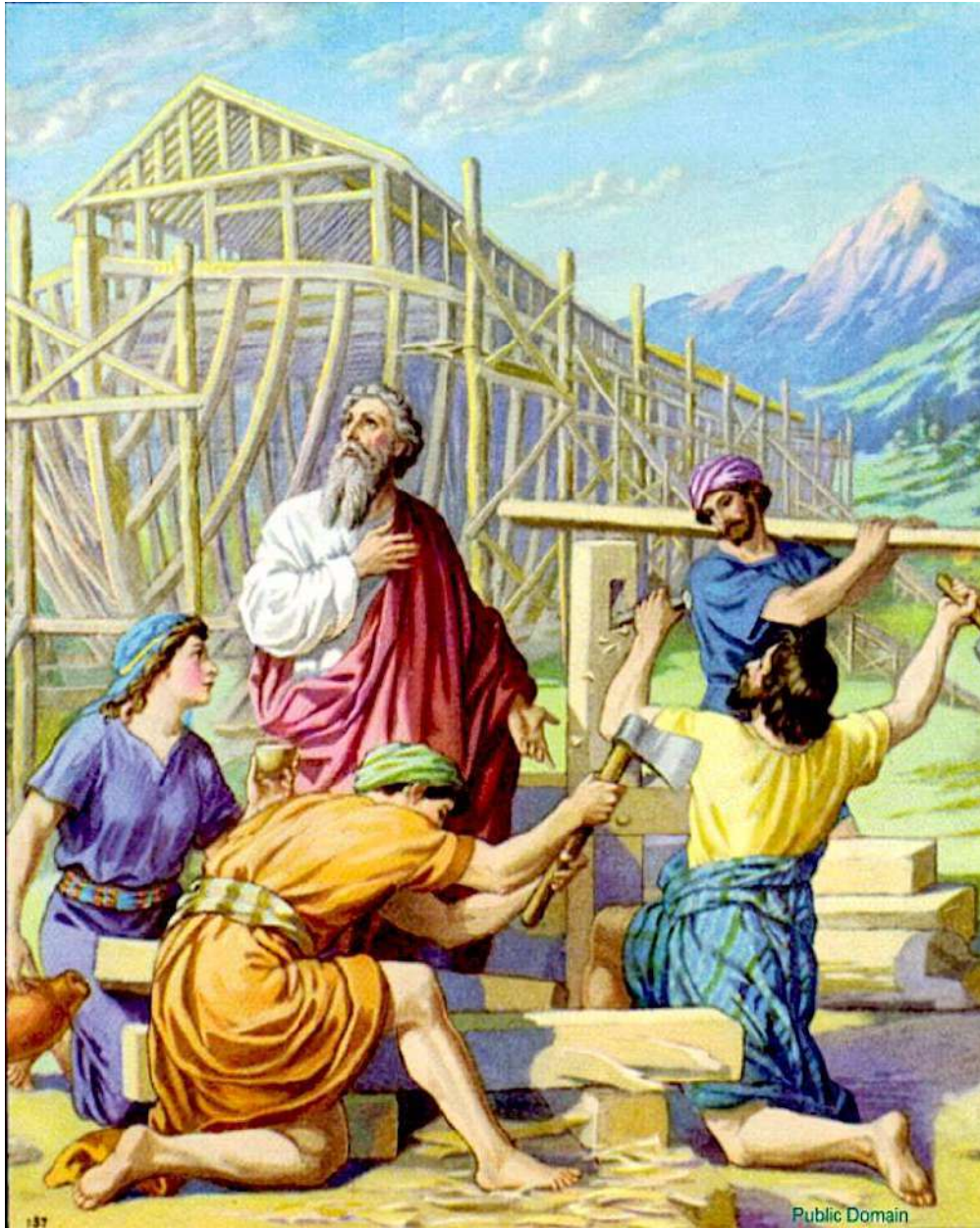
Then God continues, “I want you and your family, including your sons and their wives, to enter the ark with you when it is finished. Make sure you bring along every kind of living creature – beasts and birds. Bring two of a kind, male and female, so that they may live with you after the flood. Take with you all the food that your family and the animals will need.” Noah did all the things that God commanded him. (Gen 6:18-22)

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<sup>26</sup> The Bible did not give exact dates. Therefore, the dates given here, especially those before the time of King David, are only calculated based on other data given in the Bible.

<sup>27</sup> A *cubit* is about the length of a forearm (18 inches). Therefore, the dimensions of Noah’s ark are approximately 450 ft long x 75 ft wide x 45 ft high.





**Fig 1.3.1 Noah and His Sons Build the Ark**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

When the ark was finished, God said to Noah, “The time has come. Go now, you and your family, and all your animals into the ark. For after seven days, I will let rain fall upon the earth forty days and forty nights. I will destroy everything that I have made from the face of the earth.” Noah did all the things which the Lord had commanded him. His family, the birds and the beasts, went into the ark. (Gen 7:1-5)





**Fig 1.3.2 The Animals Go into the Ark.**

A painting by Edward Hicks (1780-1849)

After seven days the floodgates of heaven opened. Rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. The water lifted up the ark, and the ark floated on the water. The water covered the face of the earth, even the top of the high mountains. The water was 15 cubits (22.5 ft) higher than the mountain top which it covered. All men and all animals that were not in the ark, including the birds, were drowned. Only Noah and his family, and the animals who were with him in the ark, were saved. Then the rain ceased but the waters stayed upon the earth for 150 days. (Gen 7:11-12, 17-24)



**Fig 1.3.3 The Great Flood**

Artist unknown; Italian School, 1600-1700

## **God Made a Promise to Noah**

(Gen 8:1-22; 9:13-17)

God remembered Noah and all the animals in the ark. He brought a wind upon the earth to let the waters dry. The ark finally rested upon the mountains of Armenia.<sup>28</sup> Wanting to know if the waters had subsided, Noah opened the window of the ark, and sent forth a raven, which did not return. He also sent forth a dove to see if the waters had now dried upon the face of the earth. Not finding where her foot might rest, the dove returned to him. Noah put his hand out and caught her, and brought her back into the ark. (Gen 8:1-9)

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<sup>28</sup> Many believe this to be Mount Ararat, the tallest peak in modern Turkey.





**Fig 1.3.4 The Return of the Dove to the Ark**  
Artist: John Everett Millais (1829-1896)

Having waited another seven days, he sent forth the dove again. The dove came back to him in the evening carrying a twig of an olive tree, with green leaves, in her mouth. Noah understood that the waters subsided upon the earth. He waited in the ark another seven days. Again, he sent forth the dove, which returned no more. Noah looked out and saw that the face of the earth was dried. (Gen 8:10-13)

God spoke to Noah, saying: “Go out of the ark now, you and your wife, your sons and the wives of your sons with you. And let all the beasts, as well the birds, go upon the earth to increase and multiply.” So, Noah went out, he and his sons, his wife, and the wives of his sons with him. All animals, beasts and birds, also went out of the ark. Then Noah built an altar unto the Lord,



and taking cattle and birds that were clean, offered a sacrifice (or offering) upon the altar. (Gen 8:15-20)

The Lord God was very pleased with Noah's offering and said, "I will never curse the earth again on account of man, for the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth. I will not destroy every living soul again. The days of the earth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, night and day, shall not cease." Then He set a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant or promise. (Gen 8:21-22, 9:13)



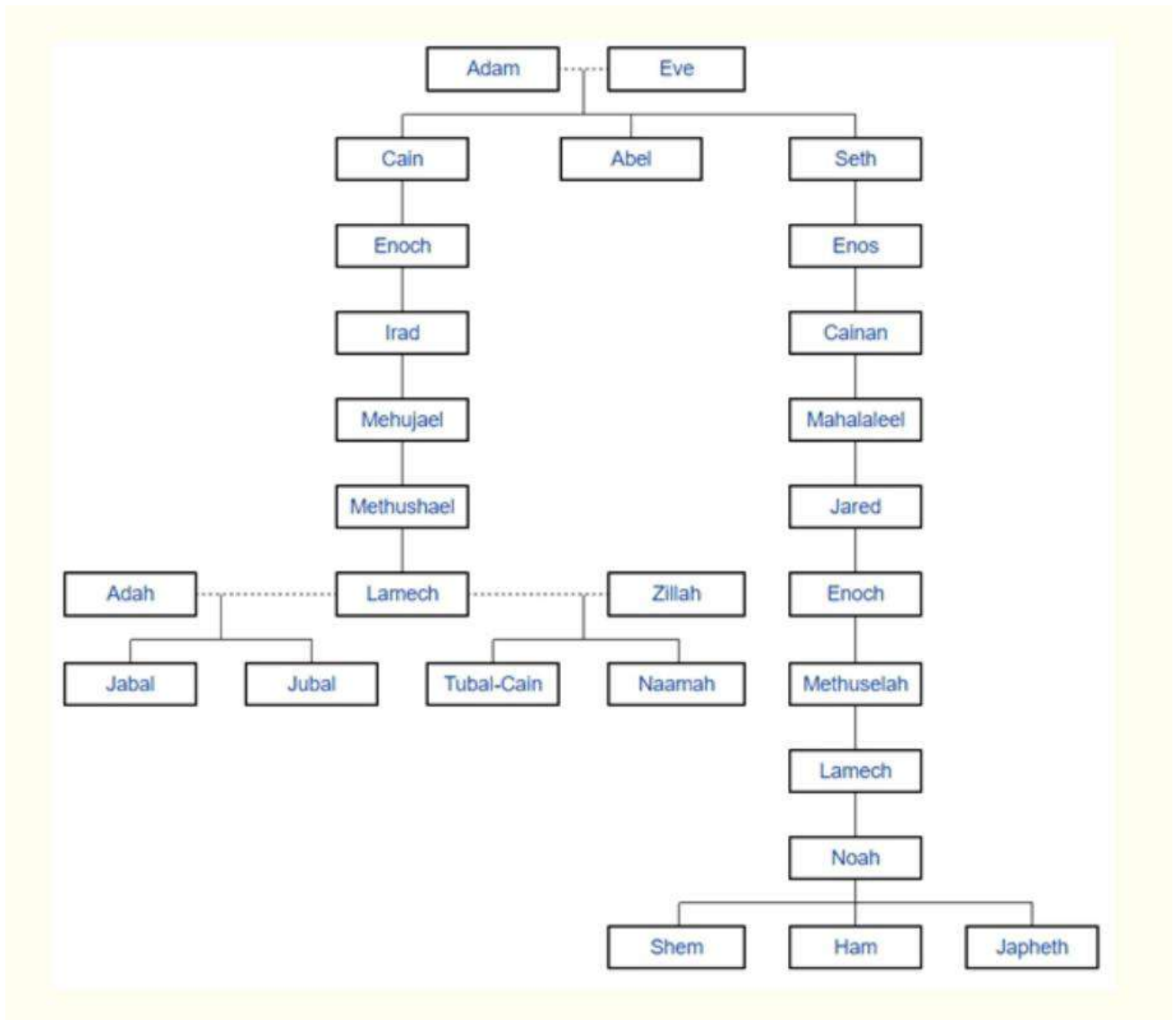
**Fig 1.3.5 Noah Makes an Offering; God Makes a Promise**

Artist: Daniel Maclise (1806-1870)

## COMMENTARY

1. The biblical story of Noah and the ark speaks of a **Great Flood** that covered “all the high mountains under the whole heaven” (Gen 7:19). The story might seem mythological at first. But, in addition to the fact that many countries all over the world have *tales of a cataclysmic flood* that once devastated humankind, the hypothesis of a global flood actually fit many pieces of geological data, such as fossils of marine animals being found at higher elevations on the earth’s surface, etc. See *What are Some of the Best Flood Evidences?* Taken singly, these facts do NOT prove the biblical Deluge; but collectively they serve as *verifications* of the flood hypothesis.
2. There are some who believe that a Great Flood happened, but not a world-wide one. Since the Hebrew word for “world” in the Genesis story could also be translated as “country,” the human writer of the Flood narrative might be speaking of a flood over *an area of land as far as the eye could see*, but not necessarily a global one, since the human writer did not have a concept of a round earth at the time. Regarding the ark of Noah itself, it is possible that it was dismantled shortly after the flood, because it was never mentioned again elsewhere in the Bible. However, claims of finding the ark, or portions of the ark, continue to be made from time to time, and the evidences are still being studied.
3. The ark is a type of the Catholic Church. As no one outside the ark was saved, *no one outside the Catholic Church can attain salvation*. This means that those who know the Church to be founded by Christ, but choose not to join it, will not be saved. However, those people who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of Christ or the Church, but who seek God with sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do God’s will, is indeed separated from the body of the Church, but is united to the soul of the Church and, therefore, may be saved. (CCC 846, 847)
4. Noah is also a type or figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Christ, Noah was singularly just. He built the ark to save the human race from the Deluge, as Christ founded the Church to save the world from eternal damnation. Noah also offered a sacrifice, as Christ offered Himself on the cross.

## 5. Genealogy of Noah<sup>29</sup>



<sup>29</sup> Adam and Eve had plenty of children, sons and daughters (Gen 4:4). But only three sons – Cain, Abel and Seth – are named in the Bible. The diagram is from the *Wikipedia*.



## The Sons of Noah

(Gen 9:18-27)

The sons of Noah, who came out of the ark, were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham also had a son whose name was Canaan. Together they helped Noah, a farmer, to till the ground and plant a vineyard.<sup>30</sup> (Gen 9:18-20)



**Fig 1.3.6 The Sons of Noah**

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

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<sup>30</sup> A vineyard is a plantation of grapevines used for making wine.



Once, after drinking wine, Noah got drunk and fell asleep in his tent naked.<sup>31</sup> When Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father laying naked, he went and told his two brothers outside about it. Shem and Japheth put a cloak upon their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father with their faces turned away, so that they would not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke and learned that Ham did not cover him, but revealed his nakedness to his brothers, he cursed Ham's son, Canaan, and blessed Shem and Japheth. He said, "Cursed be Canaan, a servant shall he be to his brothers. Blessed be the God of Shem; may Canaan be his servant. May God increase Japheth's family, that they may dwell in the tents of Shem, and that Canaan be their servant." (Gen 9:21-28)

## COMMENTARY

1. It is strange that Canaan was cursed instead of his father, Ham, unless he was actually the guilty one. Possibly, it was really Canaan who first saw Noah laying naked, and who then told about it jestingly to his father. But Ham was guilty, too, because, instead of covering his father reverently as Shem and Japheth had done, he went out and told his brothers, which caused Noah to be embarrassed more. Therefore, it is also possible that, by cursing Canaan, Noah meant to punish Ham primarily, by cursing Ham's descendants through Canaan.
2. The blessings granted to Shem and Japheth were not for them alone, but also for their descendants. It is not uncommon in Holy Scripture that God's blessings (or curses) to a person extend to that person's descendants. As part of Canaan's punishment, God later promised the land of Canaan to one of Shem's descendants: Abraham (Gen 13:15).

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<sup>31</sup> Noah was an upright man. He probably did not know how strong the wine was, which was why he drank too much of it and got drunk.

## CHAPTER 4 THE TOWER OF BABEL - (ca. 2100 B.C.) (Gen 11:1-9)



**Fig 1.4.1 The Tower of Babel**  
by an unknown Dutch artist, circa 1600-1700

At that time people had only one language or one speech. Now, when Noah's descendants increased in number, they realized that they could no longer live together in the same place and must separate from each other. Before they separated, however, they said to each other, "Let us first make a city and a tower, the top of which may reach to heaven. This will make us famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands." (Gen 11:1-4)

The Lord came down to see the city and the tower that they were building. He said, "Behold, they are one people and have a common

language. They began this project and would not abandon their ambition until they finish it. Let us, therefore, confound their tongue,<sup>32</sup> so that they may not understand one another's speech." God confounded their speech and they began talking in different languages. Since they could no longer understand each other nor work together, they stopped building the city and began to separate. In this way God scattered them from that place into all lands. (Gen 11:5-8)

The city was called Babel<sup>33</sup> because there the language of the whole earth was confounded.<sup>34</sup>

## COMMENTARY

1. It might seem at first that God's act of confounding the people's languages was a form of punishment, for it compelled them to disperse to different places on earth. Actually, it was also a blessing because if they had stayed in one place, quarrelling would likely have occurred among them, as it did among the herdsmen of Abram and those of Lot (Gen 13:7)
2. The descendants of Shem stayed in Asia, and from them came the Israelites. The descendants of Ham settled in Africa, while those of Japheth occupied Europe.
3. The story of the Tower of Babel is significant because it tells us how the different languages of the world originated. The story might appear legendary, but recent archaeological discoveries and philological studies indicate that the world's languages might indeed have a common origin. Tales from Mesopotamia and

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<sup>32</sup> To *confound their tongue* means to break their language into several different languages.

<sup>33</sup> The name "Babel" in Hebrew means confusion, which was an appropriate name for the city because it was there that the various languages of the world were confounded.

<sup>34</sup> Actually, different languages would have developed naturally anyway as people disperse into different places. But what happened at Babel was a miraculous confounding of languages. By God's miracle the people suddenly spoke different languages and were forced to give up their project and separate from one another.

other parts of the world made reference to a single language at the beginning of human civilization. See *Confusion of Languages*.

4. How about the Tower of Babel itself? Are there indications that the descendants of Noah could have built such a massive structure as described in the Bible? The short answer is Yes! The foundations of massive structures, known as the *ziggurat*, were found in Babylon (now called Iraq), indicating that the technology for undertaking a huge building project like the Tower of Babel was not unknown in the ancient world. See *Is there Archaeological Evidence of the Tower of Babel?*



**Fig 1.4.2 Ziggurat of Ur (in Iraq)**



## CHAPTER 5 THE STORY OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC



**Fig 1.5.1 Map of Mesopotamia,<sup>35</sup> the Homeland of Abraham**  
From Bible Atlas Online, by Access Foundation

<sup>35</sup> Mesopotamia is the fertile valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.



## The Call of Abram

(Gen 11:11-12:7)

In time the people of the world became wicked again and had forgotten the faith of their fathers. Terah, a descendant of Shem, worshipped other gods (Jos 24:2). He originally lived in the city of Ur, which is at the southeastern end of Mesopotamia. (See Map) One day he decided to move out of that place. He brought his son, Abram, and other family members out of Ur, and they settled in Haran. (Gen 11:27-31)



**Fig 1.5.2 Abram Travels to Canaan with His Family**

Artist: József Molnár (1821-1899)

While Terah was an idol worshipper, his son, Abram, was not. Abram, whose name God would later change to Abraham (Gen 17:5), kept his faith in only one God. So, God favored him, that through him the knowledge of the true faith and the promise of a future Redeemer might not be forgotten among men. While Abram was in Haran, God told him, “Leave your country, and come into the land which I will show you. I will make of you a great nation.” Abram did as God commanded him. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his servants and flocks, and went to Canaan, where the Lord appeared to him again and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.”<sup>36</sup> (Gen 12:1-7)

### **Abram and Lot Parted Ways - (ca. 2085 B.C.)** (Gen 13:5-18)

Now Lot also had flocks of sheep, and herds of other animals. The land was not enough for him and Abram to dwell together because they both had great possessions. There arose a strife between the herdsmen of Abram and of Lot. Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no quarrel between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. Behold the whole land is before you. Depart from me. If you will go to the left, I will go to the right. If you choose the right, I will go to the left.” Lifting up his eyes, Lot saw all the country about the Jordan river, which was watered throughout. Lot therefore chose the country about the Jordan, and dwelt in Sodom, while Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan. (Gen 13:5-12)

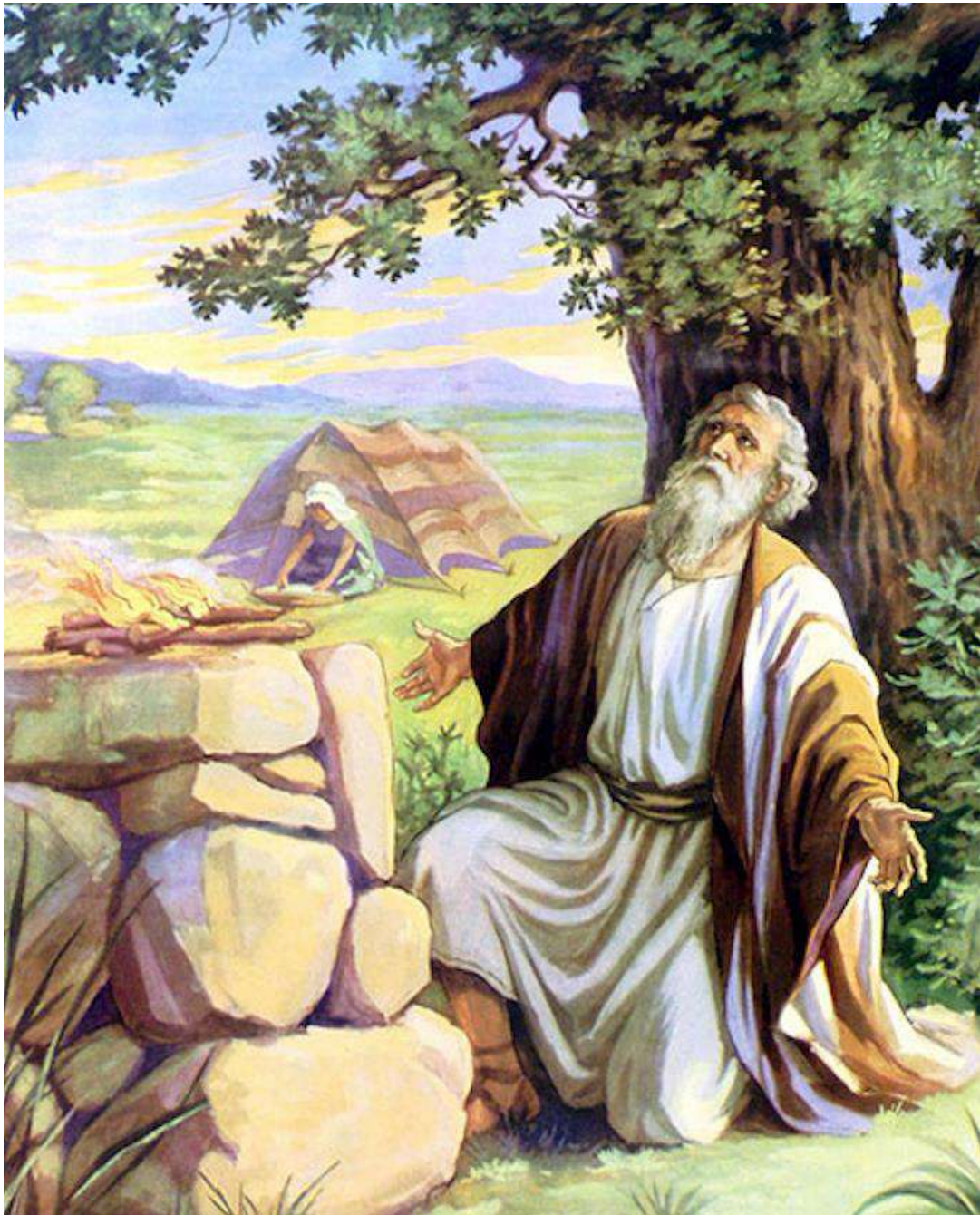
When Lot had departed, the Lord said to Abram, “Lift up your eyes, and look from the place wherein you now are, to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west. All the land which you see, I will give to you, and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants *as numerous as*

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<sup>36</sup> On account of this promise, the land of Canaan has been called “The Promised Land.”



*the dust of the earth.*”<sup>37</sup> Abram moved his tent and dwelt by the valley of Mamre. There he built an altar to the Lord. (Gen 13:14-18)



**Fig 1.5.3 Abram Builds an Altar**

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<sup>37</sup> As numerous as the dust of the earth. This was a big promise, since Abram’s wife, Sarai, was barren (Gen 11:30), and he himself was already seventy-five years old when he left his country (Gen 12:4). But, of course, to God nothing is impossible.



## Abram Rescues Lot

(Gen 14)

Lot chose to live in Sodom and the land near the Jordan because he saw that the land was fertile.<sup>38</sup> But the Sodomites were exceedingly wicked<sup>39</sup> (Gen 13:13). Soon four neighboring kings made war with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, plundered their possessions, and captured Lot and his family. When Abram heard this, he gathered his trained servants and the forces of his allies, – Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, – and pursued the aggressors. Dividing his army, he rushed upon them by night and defeated them. He brought back Lot and his possessions, the women also, and the people. (Gen 14:1-16)

When Abram returned victorious, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem,<sup>40</sup> **Melchizedek**, met him. Because Melchizedek was also a priest of the most high God, he brought forth bread and wine, and blessed Abram saying, “Blessed be Abram by the most high God, who created Heaven and earth. Blessed be the most high God, by whose protection the enemies fell in your hands.” Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (Gen 14:17-20)

The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the prisoners, and the rest take to yourself.” But Abram refused, saying, “I have sworn to the Lord God the Most High, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not receive any reward, not even one thread nor a shoe strap that is yours, lest you say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will take nothing but the food that my men have eaten, and the shares of my allies who joined forces with me, – Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. They may take their shares.” (Gen 14:21-24)

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<sup>38</sup> Lot’s choice of a place to live was based exclusively on material advantage. He did not check the moral quality of the people of Sodom, a mistake that eventually cost him and his family great losses.

<sup>39</sup> About 1500 years later the prophet Ezekiel explained why the Sodomites became so wicked. Their moral laxity was brought about by their pride, material prosperity, over-indulgence, and by their indifference to the plight of the needy and the poor (Ez 16:49-50).

<sup>40</sup> Salem was the early name of Jerusalem.



**Fig 1.5.4 Abraham Receives Bread and Wine from King Melchizedek**

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

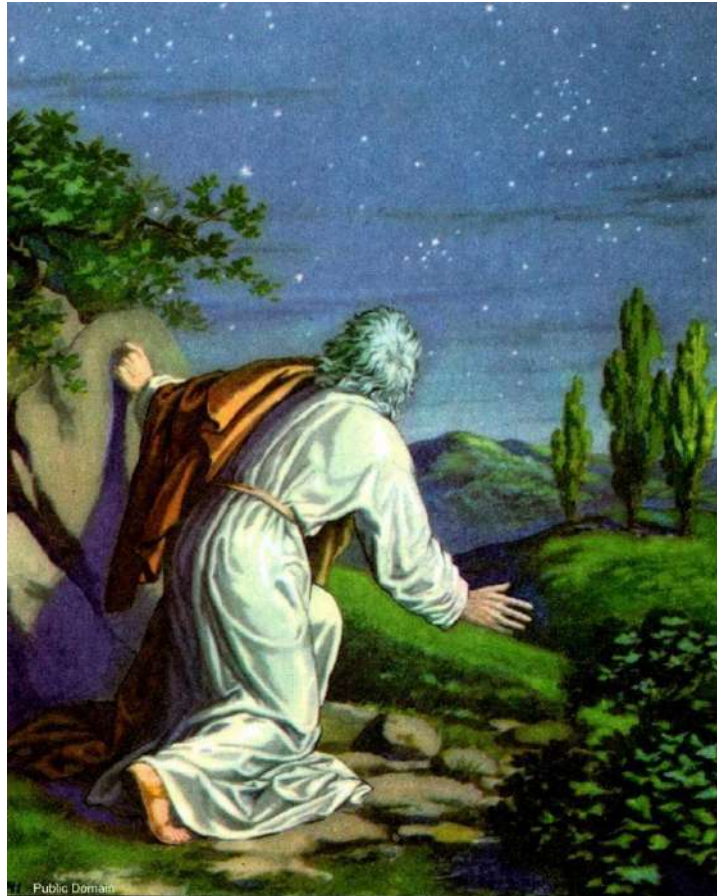
## COMMENTARY

1. This was the only time that Melchizedek was seen in the Old Testament, but his memory remained in the Bible, both in the Psalms of King David (Ps 110:4) and in the epistles of St. Paul (Heb 7:17).
2. Like Abel and Noah, Melchizedek was a figure of Jesus Christ as king and priest. He was the only priest in the Old Testament who offered bread and wine as sacrifice to God. This is significant because his offering prefigured the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is also offered under the appearances of bread and wine.

## God Repeats His Promise

(Gen 15:1-5)

After all this God spoke to Abram by a vision, saying: “Fear not, Abram, I am your protector, and your reward is exceedingly great.” Abram said, “Lord God, what will you give me? For I remain childless. The steward of my house has a son, Eliezer of Damascus. Since you have not given me a son, he will be my heir.” Immediately the Lord answered him and said, “He will not be your heir. Your own son will be your heir.” The Lord invited him to go outside his tent and said, “Look up to the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many your descendants will be.”<sup>41</sup> (Gen 15:1-5)



**Fig. 1.5.5 Abram Looks outside to See the Stars**

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<sup>41</sup> Earlier God promised Abram that his descendants will be *as numerous as the dust of the earth*. Now He is saying that his descendants will be *as innumerable as the stars in the sky*.



## The Birth of Ishmael

(Gen 16:1-16)

Sarai, the wife of Abram, had so far brought forth no child. However, she had an Egyptian slave-girl, named Hagar. She said to Abram, “Behold, the Lord has not given me a child. Take my handmaid, that I may have children of her at least. When Abram agreed to her request, Sarai gave Hagar to him as a wife.<sup>42</sup> That was ten years after they first dwelt in the land of Canaan. (Gen 16:1-3)

Abram took Hagar. Later on, when she perceived that she was with child, she despised Sarai, her mistress. Sarai said to Abram, “I gave my handmaid to you, and now that she perceived herself to be with child, she despises me. May the Lord do justice between you and me.” Abram answered and said to her, “Behold, your handmaid is yours. Do with her as you please.” When Sarai treated her harshly, Hagar ran away. (Gen 16:4-6)

The angel of the Lord<sup>43</sup> found Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, which is on the way to Shur. He said to her, “Hagar, handmaid of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She answered, “I flee from the face of Sarai, my mistress.” The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and humble yourself under her hand. I will multiply your children so exceedingly, that they can’t be counted. Behold, you are with child, and you shall bring forth a son. You shall name him Ishmael because the Lord has heard your affliction.” Hagar brought forth a son to Abram, who named him Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born. (Gen 16:7-16)

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<sup>42</sup> By Mesopotamian law a barren woman could give her female slave to her husband and legally claim the ensuing child as her own.

<sup>43</sup> Here as in many other places in the Old Testament, “the angel of the Lord” is not a creature distinct from God Himself, but is God in visible form. For, in those instances when “the angel of the Lord” speaks, he speaks as though he is God Himself. For instance, see Gen 16:7-12; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; Ex 3:2; Num 22:21-33; Jgs 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Sam 24:16; Zec 1:12; 3:1; 12:8.

## COMMENTARY

1. That Abram had a concubine (Hagar) does not mean that God approves polygamy. God instituted marriage when He created Eve for Adam. A careful reading of Genesis 2:18-25 reveals that from the beginning God wanted marriage to be between one man and one woman, for He created just one woman for Adam. Christ confirmed this, too, when He said that this was God's intent "from the beginning" (Matt 19:4, 8), and that he who leaves his wife to marry another commits adultery.
2. The Bible honestly stated that Abram (or Abraham) and some of the other patriarchs had more than one wife. But God never recommended polygamy. He merely tolerated the accepted practice of the time, a practice that Christ would later correct in the New Testament. Abram was an upright man. That he yielded to Sarai's request to take Hagar for his second wife was a mistake, but this only means that being upright does not mean being perfect. However, Abram also suffered the evil consequences of this mistake because, by Sarai's request, he sadly had to send Hagar and Ishmael away later (Gen 21:8-14).

## God Makes a Covenant

(Gen 17:1-20)

When Abram reached ninety-nine years of age, the Lord appeared to him again and said, “I am the Almighty God. Walk before me, and be perfect. I will make my covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply your descendants exceedingly.” Abram fell on his face. (Gen 17:1-3)

God said to him, “This is My covenant with you. You shall be a father of many nations. *Neither shall your name be Abram anymore, but you shall be called Abraham*, because I have made you the father of many nations.<sup>44</sup> I will increase your family exceedingly, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you. I will establish my covenant between Me and you and your descendants by a perpetual covenant, to be a God to you and to your descendants. I will give to you and your descendants the land where you have immigrated, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual possession, and I will be their God.” (Gen 17:4-8)

Again, God said to Abraham, “Therefore keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you, generation after generation. This is My covenant which you shall observe between Me and you, and your descendants after you: *All of your males shall be circumcised*. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins as a sign of the covenant between Me and you. Generation after generation, every male child in your household shall be circumcised as soon as he is eight days old. This applies both to him that is born in the house, as well as to him that is bought outside,<sup>45</sup> and who is not your child. My covenant shall be in your flesh for a perpetual covenant. The male who is uncircumcised shall be cut off from his people, because he has broken my covenant.” (Gen 17:9-14)

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<sup>44</sup> In Hebrew *Abram* means a high father, but *Abraham* means the father of many (or of a multitude).

<sup>45</sup> Those that are “bought” are the slaves, for only slaves can be bought and sold.

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God also said to Abraham, “*You shall no longer call your wife Sarai but Sarah.*”<sup>46</sup> I will bless her, and of her I will give you a son, whom you shall call Isaac. I will bless him, and he will become the father of nations. I will establish My perpetual covenant with him and his descendants. As for Ishmael I will also bless him and make him a great nation.” (Gen 17:15-20)

## COMMENTARY

1. A covenant is an agreement between two persons, similar to a business contract, but with this important difference: in a business contract there is usually an exchange of *goods* and *services*; but in a covenant there is an exchange of *persons*. For example, when a buyer agrees to give money to the seller in exchange for his land, we have an exchange of goods (*money* in exchange for *land*). This is a real estate business contract. This is different from a covenant, such as marriage. When a man marries a woman, he promises himself, his love and loyalty, to the woman; in turn the woman promises herself, her love and loyalty to the man. Here we see an exchange of *persons*, the man giving himself totally to the woman, and the woman giving herself totally to the man. Thus, marriage is not a contract; it is a covenant. Because the covenant results from an exchange of persons, it creates a binding and lasting *family* bond. When two persons enter into a business contract, they do not become relatives. But when two persons enter into a covenant, they become one family. In God’s covenant with Abraham’s tribe, Abraham and his descendants give themselves to God as His people, while God gives Himself to them as their Father and Lord.
2. Among the Jews circumcision is not just a cultural tradition but a *religious rite*. It is a sacred sign of God’s covenant with His chosen people, and is supposed to be done not only to Abram’s male descendants, but also to every male person in his household, including the male slaves.

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<sup>46</sup> *Sarai* means my Lady or my Princess, but *Sarah* simply means Lady or Princess.

## The Three Strangers

(Gen 18:1-15)

Soon afterwards the Lord appeared again to Abraham in the plains of Mamre. Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day when he saw three men standing near him. He ran to meet them and bowed facing the ground.<sup>47</sup> (Gen 18:1-2)



**Fig 1.5.6 Abram Greet His Visitors**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

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<sup>47</sup> “Bowed facing the ground,” this is a sign of deep respect. Abraham must have sensed that the strangers were divine, though they all appeared to him in human form. One (“the Lord”) represented God, and the other two were angels (Gen 19:1).

Then he said, “Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not go away from your servant. I will fetch a little water, and you may wash your feet and rest under the tree. I will get a piece of bread that you may refresh yourselves. Afterwards you may pass on, since you only stopped by to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have spoken.” (Gen 18:3-5)

When the men had eaten, they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” He answered, “She is in the tent.” The Lord said to him, “I will return at this time (next year), and Sarah, your wife, shall have a son.” When Sarah heard this, she laughed behind the door of the tent. For they were both old and far advanced in years, and Sarah had ceased having monthly periods. So, Sarah laughed secretly, saying: “Now that I am old, and my husband is an old man, shall I still experience marital pleasure?” (Gen 18:9-12)

The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh... Is there anything difficult for God?” Sarah denied that she laughed, saying: “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. But the Lord said, “You did laugh.” (Gen 18:13-15)

## COMMENTARY

1. Abraham showed great love for neighbor in this episode. He brought water for them to wash their feet, and even offered them food to eat. As a reward for this virtue, God promised him that in a year he would have a son. This was no small reward. It was a big reward because his wife Sarah was actually barren.
2. Unfortunately, Sarah laughed and thought that God’s word was too funny. At least God was kind enough to her that He did not punish her for her incredulity. In the New Testament the angel Gabriel punished Zachary (by making him temporarily speechless) when he doubted the angel’s word that his old and barren wife, Elizabeth, was going to conceive a son (Luke 1:18-20).



## Abraham's Intercession

(Gen 18:16-33)

When the men rose up, they turned their eyes toward Sodom, and Abraham walked with them to speed them on their way. Then the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that he shall become the father of a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, that I will go down and see whether their actions are as bad as the outcry that has come to Me.” (Gen 18:16-21)

The two men (angels) went their way to Sodom, but the Lord stayed with Abraham. As they drew closer, Abraham said, “Will You destroy the righteous with the wicked? If there be fifty righteous men in the city, shall they perish with all the rest? Will You not spare that place for the sake of the fifty righteous ones who are in it? This is not like You. You who judge all the earth, will not make this judgment.” (Gen 18:22-25)

The Lord said to him, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous men within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.” (Gen 18:26)

Abraham replied, “Seeing I dared to speak to my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes, what if there be five less than fifty righteous persons? Will You for forty-five destroy the whole city?” The Lord said, “I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there.” (Gen 18:27-28)

Again, Abraham said to Him, “But if forty righteous people be found there, what will You do?” He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty.” “Lord,” Abraham continued, “What if thirty righteous people be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it, if I find thirty righteous people there.” (Gen 18:29-30)

“Seeing I dared to speak to my Lord,” he said, “what if twenty be found there?” He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.” (Gen 18:31)

“I beg you, Lord” he said, “be not angry if I speak yet once more. What if only ten be found there?” He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”<sup>48</sup> (Gen 18:32)

The Lord departed after speaking with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place. (Gen 18:33)

## COMMENTARY

1. This episode teaches the value of prayer and holiness of life. We should not give up nor be discouraged when we see that good people are outnumbered, or that only a handful of people are praying and living righteously. Prayer and the effort toward holiness are always precious in God’s eyes. A house may be in very poor shape, but to you it is not despicable if your loved one lives there. In the same manner, this world may be a wicked world, but God is inclined to save it if in it He finds a loving soul. This is why we should never give up praying and striving for virtue. Saintly people bring a blessing to sinners among whom they live.

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<sup>48</sup> We learn later on that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24), which means that God did not find even ten righteous men in these cities.

## The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah — (ca. 2067 B.C.) (Gen 19:1-29)

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of the city. Seeing them, he rose up and went to meet them. He bowed with his face to the ground<sup>49</sup> and said, “I beg you, my lords, turn in to the house of your servant and lodge there. Wash your feet, and in the morning, you shall go on your way.” They said, “No, we will stay in the street.” Lot insisted that they come into his home. When they had come into his house, he made them dinner and they ate. (Gen 19:1-3)

Before they went to bed, the men of the city, both young and old without exception, surrounded the house. They called Lot and said, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may *know* them.”<sup>50</sup> (Gen 19:4-5)

Lot went out to them, and shut the door after him, and said, “Please do not do this, my brothers. Do not commit this evil. I have two daughters who, as yet, have no experience with men. I will bring them out to you, and you may do as you want, but do no evil to these men, because they have come in under the shelter of my roof.”<sup>51</sup> (Gen 19:6-8)

“Stand back from there,” they said. “You settled here as a foreigner, and you want to be our judge? We will treat you worse than them.” They pressed

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<sup>49</sup> Apparently, Lot also realized that the strangers were not ordinary men but divine beings.

<sup>50</sup> In Hebrew to “know” someone is to have *physical intimacy* with that person. The Sodomites – the men and boys who surrounded Lot’s house – were obviously homosexuals who were attracted by the good looks of Lot’s guests, for they were angels having the appearance of men. It was from their abominable homosexual behavior that the name “sodomy” was derived. The sodomites were the people that St. Paul was referring to when he said that the “liers with mankind” (*concupitores masculorum*) shall not possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:10. See also Jude 1:7-8).

<sup>51</sup> “Under the shelter of my roof,” that is to say, they have come as guests in my home. At that time hospitality to a man’s guests was deemed a more sacred duty than protecting the honor of his daughters.



very violently upon Lot, and were even at the point of breaking open the doors. Behold Lot's guests (the angels) put their hand out and grabbed Lot back into the house, and shut the door. They then struck those who were outside with blindness, so that they could not find the door. (Gen 19:9-11)

Then they said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here? Son-in-law, or sons, or daughters? Bring them all out of this city, for we will destroy this place. Their cry has grown loud before the Lord, who has sent us to destroy them." Lot went out, and spoke to his future sons-in-law and said, "Arise. Get out of this place, because the Lord will destroy this city." But he seemed to them as if he was just joking. When it was morning, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters, lest you also perish in the wickedness of this city." Because Lot lingered, the angels took his hand, and the hand of his wife, and of his two daughters. Since the Lord wanted to spare him, the angels brought him forth, and set him outside the city. (Gen 19:12-17)



**Fig 1.5.7 Lot and His Daughters Flee from Sodom**

Artist: Benjamin West (1738-1820)

There they spoke to him, saying, “Save your life. Do not look back, nor stay in any of the country nearby, but save yourself in the mountain.” Lot said to them, “Please, my Lord,<sup>52</sup> because your servant has found grace before you, and you have magnified your mercy in saving my life, let me not escape to the mountain, lest some evil seize me there and I die. There is this little place nearby to which I may flee. Let me take refuge in it.” The Lord said to him, “I heard your prayer. Hurry and be safe there, because I cannot do anything until you reach that little place.” The place was called Zoar.<sup>53</sup> (Gen 19:17-22)

When the sun rose upon the earth, Lot entered Zoar. The Lord rained brimstone and fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. He destroyed these cities, and all the country around (save Zoar), all the inhabitants of the cities, and all things that spring from the earth. Lot’s wife looked back behind her, and she was turned into a statue of salt. (Gen 19:23-26)

Early in the morning, Abraham got up, and in the place where he previously stood with the Lord, he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole country, and saw the ashes rising up from the earth like the smoke of a furnace. (Gen 19:27-28)

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<sup>52</sup> In this narrative the angels were sometimes referred to as “my Lord” or “the Lord” because they represented God.

<sup>53</sup> The name “Zoar” itself means “a little thing.”

## COMMENTARY

1. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were once considered purely legendary, because efforts to locate them were initially unsuccessful. Even their names could not be found anywhere outside the Bible. Yet these cities were important, for they were used by our Lord and by the Apostles in their teachings as illustrations of God's just punishments (Matt 10:15, 2 Pet 2:6 and Jude 1:7). Recent archaeological investigations prove the historicity of these cities. Excavations made in 1964-1975 at Tell Mardikh, the site of the old city of Ebla in northern Syria, unearthed about 17000 clay tablets dating back to 2300 B.C. Some of these tablets contain inscriptions that have recently been translated. In one of them the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were mentioned. See *EBLA: Its Impact on Bible Records*. Not only were the names of these cities found etched in stone, but there is also evidence that the possible locations of these cities have been identified. Excavations at suspected sites east of the Dead Sea made in 1965, 1967 and 1973 disclosed that these sites were at one time populous cities that were destroyed by a catastrophic fire, matching the biblical record of these two cities (Gen 19:24-25). See *The Discovery of the Sin Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah*. More recently archaeologists pointed to another site north of the Dead Sea, in an oval-shaped plain known as Tall el-Hammam, whose remains also match the infamous city of Sodom. It was speculated that a meteoric blast caused the massive disaster described in the Bible. See *Sodom and Gomorrah Proved!*
2. Lot's wife being turned into a statue of salt is regarded by many as a reminder for us to proceed in virtue when we want to flee from sin, and not to look back toward vice or its allurements.



## Lot and His Daughters

(Gen 19:30-38)



**Fig 1.5.8 Lot and His Daughters**  
Artist: Marcantonio Franceschini (1648-1729)

Lot did not stay long in Zoar. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah he settled in a hill country with his two daughters, and dwelt in a cave. The elder said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man left on earth to mate with us after the manner of the whole earth. Come, let us make him drunk with wine, and let us sleep with him, that we may preserve the race.” They made their father drink wine that night, and the

elder went in and slept with her father. Lot was so drunk that he was unaware when his daughter laid down, nor when she rose up. The next day the elder said to the younger, “Behold I laid last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine again tonight, and you sleep with him, that we may preserve our race.” They made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went in and laid with him. Neither then did Lot perceive when she laid down, nor when she rose up. (Gen 19:29-35)

So the two daughters of Lot were with child by their father. And the elder bore a son, and named him Moab; he became the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son, and named him Ammon; he is the father of the Ammonites to this day. (Gen 19:36-38)

## COMMENTARY

1. This episode could be shocking to some readers because it seems to depict an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters. However, one must consider the circumstances and the motivations of Lot and his daughters. Lot was faultless because he was drunk and was unaware of the plot made by his daughters. On the other hand, his daughters felt no shame in what they did because, since God just destroyed all the cities in the area, they thought that they were the only people left alive. This is why they felt obligated to do what they did to preserve the human race and populate the earth again.
2. Many of the relationships we read in Holy Scripture will appear shocking to us, but God must have applied a special dispensation to people in the early days. For instance, one can easily imagine the situation of the children of Adam and Eve at the beginning of the human race. They must have married their brothers, sisters or near relatives, since they had no one else. Actually, even Sarah, Abraham’s wife, was actually his half-sister, being the daughter of his father from a different mother (Gen 20:12). But what was acceptable in Old Testament times is not necessarily acceptable today, since we already live under entirely different conditions.

## The Birth of Isaac

(Gen 21:2-5)

Sarah conceived and bore a son in her old age, at the time that God had foretold her. Abraham named him Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. (Gen 21:2-5)

## The Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael

(Gen 21:9-14, 20-21)

One day Sarah saw Hagar's son, Ishmael, teasing Isaac. She said to Abraham, "Cast out my slave-girl, Hagar, and her son. For the son of a slave-girl shall not be heir with my son Isaac." Abraham was greatly distressed, for the slave-girl's son was his son, too. (Gen 21:9-11)

But God said to him, "Do not be distressed for the boy and for your slave-girl. Grant Sarah's request, for Isaac is the one who will carry your name. I will also make the slave-girl's son the father of a great nation, because he is your son." Abraham rose up in the morning, and taking bread and a bottle of water, put it upon Hagar's shoulder, gave her Ishmael, and sent them away. (Gen 21:12-14)

Ishmael lived in the wilderness of Paran, and became an archer. His mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.<sup>54</sup> (Gen 21:21)

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<sup>54</sup> As God promised, Ishmael became the father of another nation, the Ishmaelites. He also had a daughter who later married Esau, a son of Isaac (Gen 28:9).



## Abraham's Sacrifice – (ca. 2054 B.C.) (Gen 22:1-18)

One day God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham, Abraham. Take your son Isaac, whom you love, and go into the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him for a holocaust<sup>55</sup> upon one of the mountains which I will show you.” Rising up in the night, Abraham saddled his donkey, and took with him two young men and his son, Isaac. When he had cut wood for the holocaust, he went to the place which God had commanded him. On the third day, lifting up his eyes, he saw the place afar off. He said to the young men, “Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go the mountain to offer sacrifice. After we have worshipped, we will return to you.” (Gen 22:1-5)



**Fig 1.5.9 Abraham and Isaac Go to Offer a Holocaust**

Artist: Pedro Orrente (1580-1645)

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<sup>55</sup> A “holocaust,” that means, a burnt offering. In a holocaust the victim had to be killed first, then wholly burnt.

He took the wood for the holocaust, and laid it upon Isaac. And he carried in his hands the fire pot and a knife. As they went on together, Isaac said to his father, “My father.” Abraham answered, “What is it, son?” “I can see the fire pot and the wood,” Isaac said, “but where is the victim for the holocaust?” Abraham replied, “God Himself will provide a victim for the holocaust, my son.” So they went on together. (Gen 22:6-8)

They came to the place which God showed him. There he built an altar and laid the wood in order upon it. When he had bound Isaac, he laid him on the altar upon the pile of wood. He put forth his hand, and took the knife, to sacrifice his son. (Gen 22:9-10)

Behold, the angel of the Lord<sup>56</sup> called him, saying: “Abraham, Abraham. Lay not your hand upon the boy. Neither do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, and have not spared your only begotten son<sup>57</sup> for My sake.” (Gen 22:11-12)

Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw behind his back a ram<sup>58</sup> in the bush, caught by its horns. He took the ram and offered it for a holocaust instead of his son. He named the place, *The Lord provides*. Even to this day, it is called “In the mountain the Lord provides.” (Gen 22:13-14)

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<sup>56</sup> Again, the phrase “the angel of the Lord” represents God Himself because, although an angel was seen, the voice of God was heard when he told Abraham that he had not spared his son “for *My* sake.”

<sup>57</sup> Isaac was not really Abraham’s “only begotten son” because he had another son, Ishmael. However, the Hebrew phraseology calls Isaac as “only begotten son” because Ishmael, together with his mother, had already been cast off from Abraham’s family or tribe.

<sup>58</sup> In the terminology of the shepherds a male sheep is called a *ram*, a female sheep is called a *ewe* (pronounced “you”), and a young sheep is called a *lamb*.





**Fig 1.5.10 The “Angel of the Lord” Stops Abraham from Killing Isaac**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639-1709)



The angel of the Lord called Abraham a second time from Heaven, saying, “By Myself I have sworn, that because you have done this thing, and have not spared your only begotten son for My sake, I will bless you and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and as the sand by the sea shore. Your descendants will possess the gates of their enemies. In your descendants will all the nations of the earth find their blessing, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Gen 22:15-18)

### COMMENTARY

1. That God ordered Abraham to kill his son and to offer him as a holocaust should not be interpreted that God gives anyone the right to take away the life of an innocent person. He can ask Abraham to kill his son as a sacrifice because He is the Author and Origin of life. He gives life and has the right to take it away. But without God’s express command, nobody has a right to take away the life of another innocent person.
2. Isaac carrying the wood on his shoulder to a mount in Moriah is a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ carrying the wood of His cross to Calvary. On the other hand, Abraham, who was willing to offer his son as a burnt offering, reminds us of God the Father who did not spare His only begotten Son, that we may be redeemed. The big difference is that, whereas God spared Abraham’s son from being killed, He did not spare His Divine Son from suffering the most painful and cruel death on the cross.
3. On account of his obedience, Abraham was promised innumerable descendants, and that in his descendants *all the nations of the earth will find their blessing*. How? Because it is from his descendants that our Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Redeemer of the world, will come. Thus, it is interesting to follow the development of salvation history by tracing the progress of the Chosen People (Abraham’s big family) generation after generation, for it was from this people that the Savior of the world was destined to come.

## A Wife for Isaac

(Gen 23:1-2; 24)

Sarah lived a hundred and twenty-seven years. She died in Kiriath-Arba (now Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham mourned and wept for her. (Gen 23:1-2)

Abraham was also now old, and the Lord had blessed him in all things. But he wished before his death to see his son Isaac happily married. As the daughters of the Canaanites were idolaters, Abraham said to his chief servant<sup>59</sup>: “Go to my own country and choose a wife for my son Isaac from among my own relatives.” (Gen 24:1-4)

The servant took ten camels of his master’s herd and departed, carrying all sorts of gifts from his master with him. He went on to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. (Gen 24:10)

In the evening he made the camels lie down outside the town near a well of water. At the time when women would come out to draw water, he begged God to show him which of the women should be Isaac’s bride. He prayed, “O Lord, show kindness to my master. Behold, I stand near the spring of water, and the women of this city will soon come out to draw water. Now, therefore, when I say to the woman whom You want Isaac to marry, ‘Let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ please make her answer, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels drink also.’ By this I shall know who the woman is who would be the right wife for Isaac.” (Gen 24:11-14)

He had not yet ended his prayer within himself when Rebekah came out carrying a pitcher on her shoulder. She was very pleasant to look at, and a

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<sup>59</sup> The chief servant now could either be Eliezer or Damascus, who were both mentioned in Gen 15:2.

most beautiful virgin. She went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and was now coming back. (Gen 24:15-16)

The servant ran to meet her and said, “Give me a little water to drink of your pitcher.” She answered, “Drink, my lord.” She quickly let down the pitcher upon her arm, and gave him a drink. When he had drunk, she said, “I will draw water for your camels also, until they all drink.” Pouring out the pitcher into the troughs, she ran back to the well to draw water, and having drawn, she gave drink to all the camels. (Gen 24:17-20)



**Fig 1.5.11 Rebekah Gives Drink to Abraham's Servant**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)



The servant watched her in silence, trying to figure out whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not. After the camels had drunk, the man took out golden earrings and bracelets, and said to her, “Whose daughter are you? Tell me, is there any place in your father’s house to lodge?” She answered, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor.” Then she also said to him, “We have a good store of both straw and hay, and a large place to lodge in.” (Gen 24:21-25)

The man bowed down and adored the Lord, saying: “Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not taken away His mercy and truth from my master, and has brought me directly into the house of my master’s brother.” Then the maid ran off and told everyone in her mother’s house all that she had heard. (Gen 24:26-28)

Rebekah had a brother, named Laban. When he saw the earrings and bracelets in his sister’s hands, and heard all that she related, he went to the man who stood by the camels near the spring of water, and said to him, “Come in, blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand outside? I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels.” (Gen 24:29-31)

Abraham’s servant came into the house. Laban unharnessed the camels, and gave him straw and hay for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the feet of the men who came with him. Bread was set before him, but he said, “I will not eat until I tell my message.” When he had finished giving his message Laban and Bethuel answered, “This word is from the Lord. We cannot speak any other thing to you but His pleasure. Behold, Rebekah is before you. Take her and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has spoken.” (Gen 24:32-51)

When Abraham's servant heard their answer, he bowed down praising God. Then, bringing forth vessels of silver and gold, and clothing, he gave them to Rebekah for a present. He also offered gifts to her brothers and to her mother. A banquet was made. They ate and drank together, and passed the night there. (Gen 24:52-53)

In the morning, the servant arose, and said, "Let me depart, that I may go to my master." Rebekah's parents allowed her to go with Abraham's servant and his company, and wished her great prosperity. Being set upon camels, Rebekah and her maids followed the man to meet Isaac and become his wife. (Gen 24:53-61)

Isaac married Rebekah and loved her so much that she became his consolation on the occasion of his mother's death. (Gen 24:67)

## COMMENTARY

1. Note how careful Abraham was in choosing a wife for his son Isaac. He wanted a woman who worshipped the same God and believed in the same religion or the same faith. Today, of course, the children, not the parents, choose their own partners in life, but the same principle applies. People preferably should marry those who belong to their faith. It minimizes religious conflicts in the family, and is less confusing for the kids. The Catholic Church discourages **mixed marriages** (that means, marriages between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic), and even regards **disparity of worship**, or the marriage between a baptized person and a non-baptized person (such as Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, etc.), invalid.
2. Note also the virtues displayed by Rebekah. She was hospitable and compassionate, not only to strangers, but even to the thirsty camels. The example of Abraham's chief servant is also noteworthy. He was so faithful to Abraham that he even prayed to God for the success of the mission entrusted to him by his master. His zeal to do his duty faithfully was such that he would not even eat dinner until he had revealed to Rebekah's family the purpose of his journey.

## CHAPTER 6 THE STORY OF JACOB – (ca. 2006 B.C.)

### Esau Sells His Birthright

(Gen 25:19-34)

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah. Isaac prayed to God for his wife because she was barren.<sup>60</sup> God heard his prayer and caused Rebekah to conceive. But the infants in her womb struggled,<sup>61</sup> and she said, “If this is how it is to be pregnant, why would I want to conceive?” She consulted the Lord and God answered, “Two nations are in your womb, and the two peoples born of you will be divided. One will overcome the other; the elder will serve the younger.” (Gen 25:19-23)

When her time for giving birth came, behold twins were found in her womb. He that came forth first was red and hairy, and was named **Esau**. The second came forth holding his brother’s foot in his hand; he was named **Jacob**. When they grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob, a plain man dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate the victims of his hunting, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (Gen 25:24-28)

Once Jacob was boiling pottage. When Esau came from the field tired and hungry, he said, “Give me some of this red pottage, for I am starving.” Jacob said to him, “First sell me your birthright, and I will give you some.” Esau agreed, saying, “I am dying of hunger. What use is the birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear therefore to me.” Esau swore to him, and sold his birthright. Taking bread and the red pottage,<sup>62</sup> he ate and drank, and went on his way, not minding that he had lost his birthright. (Gen 25:29-34)

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<sup>60</sup> Rebekah was childless for twenty years before she gave birth to her sons, for Isaac was then already sixty (Gen 25:26).

<sup>61</sup> “Infants in her womb” – because she had twins.

<sup>62</sup> Thus, Esau was called Edom (Gen 25:30), meaning “red.” He became the father of the Edomites.



**Fig 1.6.1 Esau Sells His Birthright**  
Artist: Matthias Stom (1615-1649)

## COMMENTARY

1. Esau and Jacob were twins, but since Esau was the one that came out first, he was technically the first-born and the one entitled to his father's blessing plus other privileges. That was known in Hebrew culture as the *birthright*. The privileges include becoming the head of the tribe when the father dies (2 Chr 21:3), being consecrated and priest for the family (Num 3:12-13 and 8:18), and having a double portion of the paternal inheritance (Deut 21:15-17). This is why Jacob wanted Esau to give him the birthright, but foolish Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of hot pottage (soup or stew).



## Jacob Receives His Father's Blessing

(Gen 27)

Now Isaac was old, his eyes were dim and he could not see. He called Esau, his elder son, and said to him, “My son, you see that I am old, and know not the day of my death. Take your arms and hunt something for me. Then cook me a savory dish of it, for you know how I like it. Then bring it here that I may eat, and I will bless you before I die.” (Gen 27:1-4)

When Rebekah heard this, and Esau had gone into the field to fulfill his father's command, she talked about it to her son Jacob. She then counseled him, “Bring me two young goats from the flock, that I may make of them meat for your father, such as he gladly eats. You will then bring them to him, so that after he has eaten, he may, before he dies, bless you instead of Esau.” He replied, “You know that Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, whereas my skin is smooth. If my father should feel me, and perceive it, I fear that I shall bring upon myself his curse instead of his blessing.” But Rebekah insisted on the plan. Jacob brought two young goats and gave them to his mother. She prepared the meats and asked Jacob to put on Esau's clothes. Then she put the little skins of the young goats around Jacob's hands, and used them also to cover the bare part of his neck. She gave him the savory meat, and asked him to give it to his father. (Gen 27:5-17)

When he had carried the food in, Isaac asked, “Who are you, my son?” Jacob said, “I am Esau, your firstborn. Arise, sit and eat of my venison,<sup>63</sup> that your soul may bless me.” Isaac said, “Come here, that I may feel you, and may prove whether you are my son Esau or not.” Jacob came near to his father, and when Isaac had felt him, he said, “The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” (Gen 27:18-22)

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<sup>63</sup> Venison – the meat from a deer.

After he had eaten and drunk wine, Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near me, and give me a kiss, my son.” Jacob came and kissed him. Immediately as he smelled the fragrant smell of his clothes, Isaac blessed him, saying: “Behold, the smell of my son is like the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord has blessed. May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of grain<sup>64</sup> and wine, and let peoples serve you, and tribes bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and let your mother’s children bow down before you. Cursed be he that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you.” (Gen 27:25-29)



**Fig 1.6.2 Isaac Blesses Jacob**

Artist: Nicolas-Guy Brenet (1728-1792)

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<sup>64</sup> The Douay uses the word “corn,” which is an old English word that used to refer to the seeds, not only of the plant *maiz* (corn), but also of such plants as wheat, oat, rye, barley, etc. Today “grain” is the preferred word because it is more general and, therefore, more appropriate.

When Jacob had left, Esau came and brought in to his father meats made of what he had taken in hunting. Isaac asked him, “Why! who are you?” He answered, “I am your firstborn son, Esau.” Struck with fear, Isaac said, “But who was he that brought me venison, and which I ate before you came? I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed.” When Esau heard this, he roared out with a great cry and said to his father, “Bless me also, my father.” But Isaac said, “Your brother came deceitfully and got your blessing. I have appointed him your lord, and have made all his brothers his servants. I have established his position with grain and wine, and after this, what more shall I do for you, my son?” (Gen 27:30-37)

Seeing that he had been tricked twice by Jacob, Esau became angry with Jacob and said, “The days of mourning for my father are coming, and I will kill my brother Jacob.” These words of Esau were told to Rebekah. She called Jacob and said to him, “Behold Esau, your brother, threatened to kill you. Therefore, arise and flee to Laban, my brother in Haran, and dwell with him for a while until the wrath of your brother goes away. Then I will send you word that you may come back.” Jacob consented and prepared to leave for Haran. (Gen 27:41-45)

Rebekah told Isaac that Jacob was leaving to go to Haran. The reason she gave was that she did not want to see Jacob marry a Hittite woman.<sup>65</sup> She told Isaac, “If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as those who live in this land, then I would not want to live anymore” (Gen 27:46).

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<sup>65</sup> She made a good excuse, for Esau had previously married a Hittite woman, and it had been a source of bitterness for her and Isaac (Gen 26:34-35). By going to Haran, Jacob at least would have the opportunity to find a bride among her relatives in Haran.

## COMMENTARY

1. Jacob sinfully deceived his father, Isaac, by pretending to be Esau. His mother was guilty, too, for she masterminded the plan to deceive Isaac. What they did was unfair to Isaac, but maybe not so much to Esau, since Esau already sold his birthright to Jacob. In a sense, Jacob was also unfair to Esau because he took advantage of Esau's starving condition when he asked him to sell him his birthright. But Esau could only blame himself for his great loss, since he failed to give due importance to his father's blessing and cared more for his stomach than for his birthright.
2. The transfer of Esau's birthright to Jacob is symbolic of the Jews who, by rejecting Christ, had transferred much of their grace and spiritual riches to the Gentiles (Rom 11:12).
3. Esau's selling his birthright for a measly bowl of pottage is also symbolic of every sinner who gives up the everlasting joys of Heaven for the fleeting pleasures of this world.



## Jacob's Dream

(Gen 28)

Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and instructed him, saying, “Take not a Canaanite woman for a wife, but choose one from the daughters of Laban, your uncle. May God almighty bless you, and give the blessings of Abraham to you and to your descendants, that you may possess the land of Canaan, which he promised to Abraham, your grandfather.” (Gen 28:1-4)

Jacob travelled and went to Mesopotamia of Syria, to Laban, his uncle. When Esau learned that his father had blessed Jacob, and had instructed him not to marry a Canaanite woman, he went to Ishmael and married Ishmael's daughter. (Gen 28:5-9)

When Jacob came to a certain place on his way to Haran, he rested after sunset. He took the stones that lay there, and putting them under his head, slept in the same place. In his sleep he saw a ladder standing upon the earth, the top of which touches Heaven. The angels of God were going up and down by it, and the Lord Himself was leaning upon the ladder and saying to him, “I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land in which you sleep is what I will give to you and your descendants, and your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth. You shall spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south, and in you and your descendants all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed. I will be your keeper wherever you go, and I will bring you back into this land. Neither will I leave you until I have accomplished all that I have said.” (Gen 28:11-15)



**Fig 1.6.3 Jacob's Dream**  
Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

When Jacob woke up, he said, “Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” Trembling, he said, “How awe-striking this place is! This is no other but the house of God and the gate of Heaven.” Arising in the morning, Jacob took the stone which he had laid under his head, and used it as a marker. Pouring oil upon it, he called the place *Bethel*. (Gen 28:16-19)

He also made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and will watch over me on my journey, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God. This stone, which I have used for a marker, will be called the house of God. Of all things that You give me, I will offer a tenth to You.” (Gen 28:20-22)

### COMMENTARY

1. Jacob names this place “Bethel,” which in Hebrew means the house of God. He called it by that name because he felt that God dwells there, or that he could sense God’s presence there.
2. The stone is a figure of our altars, which are also consecrated with holy oil.
3. Bethel is a figure of the Church because in the Church Christ dwells in a special way. Also, just as Bethel is the place where Jacob saw angels going up to and coming down from Heaven, so the Church is a place where angels take our prayers to Heaven and bring down new graces from God to us.
4. The ladder in Jacob’s vision is also a figure of Christ and our Redemption. As the ladder joined earth to Heaven, so Christ was the heavenly ladder by which we may climb up to God.



## Jacob Meets Rachel

(Gen 29:1-14)

Jacob went on in his journey and came to a well in the field where there were three flocks of sheep lying. The mouth of the well was covered with a large stone. The custom was for the shepherds to roll away the stone when all the sheep had gathered together, and to put it over the well again after the sheep had drunk. (Gen 29:1-3)

Jacob said to the shepherds, “Brothers, where are you from?” They answered, “From Haran.” (Gen 29:4)

Then he asked them, “Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?” They said, “We know him.” (Gen 29:5)

He said, “Is he in good health?” “He is well,” they said, “and behold, his daughter, Rachel, is coming with her father’s flock.” (Gen 29:6)

Jacob said, “There is yet much day remaining. But neither is it time to bring the flocks into the folds. First give the sheep drink, then lead them back to graze.” They answered, “We cannot. We will wait until all the animals had gathered together, then we will remove the stone from the well’s mouth and let the sheep drink.” (Gen 29:7-8)

They were still speaking when Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she fed the flock. When Jacob saw her, and knew her to be his cousin, and the sheep were those of Laban, his uncle, he removed the stone with which the well was closed. Having allowed the flock to drink, he kissed her, and lifting up his voice he wept. (Gen 29:9-11)



**Fig 1.6.4 Jacob Meets Rachel**

Artist: Joseph von Führich (1800-1876)

He told her that he was her father's brother,<sup>66</sup> and the son of Rebekah. Rachel went home in haste and told her father, Laban. When Laban heard that Jacob, his sister's son, had come, he ran forth to meet him. Then, embracing him and heartily kissing him, he brought him into his house. When he heard the reason for his journey, he answered, "You are my bone and my flesh." (Gen 29:12-14)

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<sup>66</sup> Actually, he was her father's nephew, but in Hebrew the word "brother" is also used for near relatives, such as cousins, uncles and nephews.

## Jacob Works for His Uncle Laban

(Gen 29:14-31)

After one month Laban said to Jacob, “Just because you are my nephew, shall you serve me without wages? Tell me what wages do you want for your work.” (Gen 29:14-15)

Now Laban had two daughters, the name of the elder was Leah, and the younger was Rachel. Leah had tender eyes, but Rachel was more beautiful and graceful. Being in love with her, Jacob told Laban, “I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter.” (Gen 29:16-18)

Laban answered, “It is better that I give her to you than to another man; so stay with me.” (Gen 29:19)

Jacob served Laban seven years for Rachel. To him the seven years seemed but a few days because of the greatness of his love. When the seven years had passed, he said to Laban, “Now give me my wife that I may be with her, for my service time has been completed.” (Gen 29:20-21)

Laban invited a great number of his friends to the wedding. He gave a slave-girl named Zilpah to Leah, her daughter, and at night he brought Leah instead of Rachel to marry Jacob. Jacob was unaware<sup>67</sup> that he had married and slept with Leah, and only found out in the morning. He said to Laban, “What is this that you did to me? Did I not serve you for Rachel? Why did you deceive me?” (Gen 29:22-25)

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<sup>67</sup> Jacob was probably made to drink too much wine during the festivities and was unaware that he was being tricked to marrying Leah instead of Rachel.





**Fig 1.6.5 Jacob with Laban's Flock**

Artist: Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652)

Laban answered, “It is not the custom in this place to give the younger in marriage before the elder. Serve me another seven years and I will give you Rachel, too.” Because he loved Rachel, Jacob agreed to Laban’s terms. After seven more years of working for Laban, he married Rachel, to whom her father gave Bilhah for a slave-girl. Seeing that Leah was unloved by Jacob, the Lord consoled and blessed her with many children, while He made Rachel temporarily barren. (Gen 29:26-31)

## Jacob's Children

(Gen 29:32-35; 30:1-24)

Leah conceived and bore four sons – Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Rachel, seeing herself without a child, envied her sister, and said to her husband, “I have here a slave-girl, Bilhah. Take her, that I may have children by her.”<sup>68</sup> (Gen 29:32 – 30:3)

Bilhah did conceive and bore two sons – Dan and Naphtali. Thinking that she was already barren, Leah also gave to Jacob her servant Zilpah, who then also conceived and bore two more sons – Gad and Asher. When Jacob started sleeping with Leah again, she conceived two more sons and a daughter – Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah. (Gen 30:4-21)

However, the Lord remembered Rachel and heard her prayers. Finally, Rachel also conceived a son and she said, “God has taken away my reproach.” Rachel called her son Joseph.<sup>69</sup> (Gen 30:22-24)

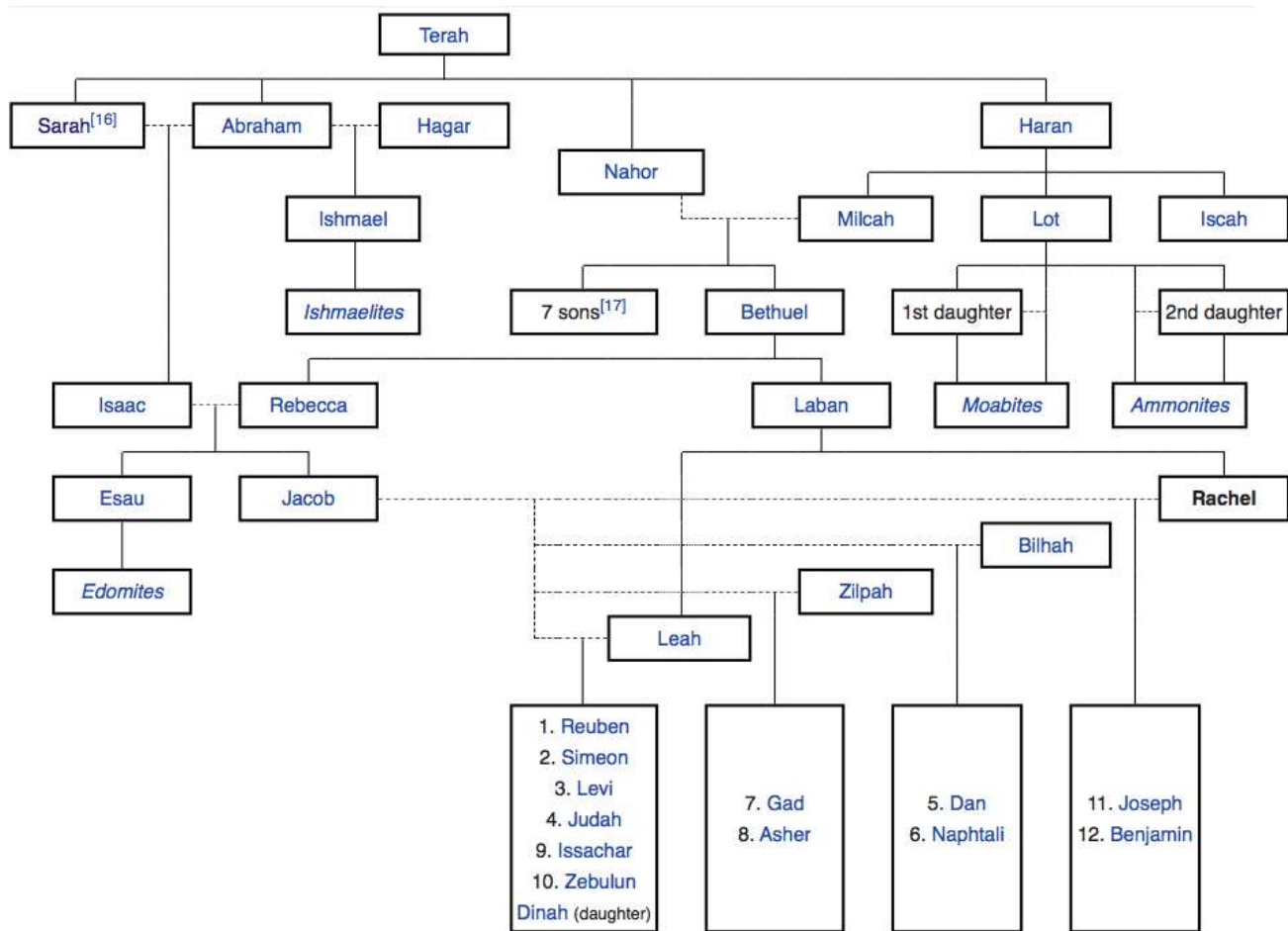
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<sup>68</sup> This was an accepted practice in the early days of the Jews. A barren woman could give her slave-girl to her husband and still legally claim the ensuing child to be her own. One may recall that Sarai, Abram's wife, also gave her slave-girl, Hagar, to Abram when she thought that she was incapable of conceiving a child (Gen 16:2).

<sup>69</sup> Joseph was not the youngest child of Jacob, though. For Rachel gave birth to another child, Benjamin, when Jacob and his entire family were on their way to Canaan. Unfortunately, Rachel died at childbirth (Gen 35:17-19).

## COMMENTARY

1. It can be very difficult to keep track of the family relationships from Abraham to the sons of Jacob. However, there is a helpful Family Tree that was published in the Wikipedia and which is reproduced here:



**Fig 1.6.6 Family Tree**

2. It is good to memorize the names of the twelve sons of Jacob because they were the **patriarchs** (or “fathers”) of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Note: God later changed Jacob’s name to Israel in Gen 32:28 and 35:10.)

## Jacob Returns to Canaan

(Gen 30:25-43; 31)

When Joseph was born, Jacob said to Laban, “Let me go now, that I may return into my country, and to my land. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may depart.” (Gen 30:25-26)

Laban said to him, “I have learned by experience that God has blessed me because of you. Tell me how much wages you want, and I will pay you.” Jacob answered, “You know how I have served you, and how great your possession has been in my hands. It is reasonable, therefore, that I should now provide also for my own family.” (Gen 30:27-30)

Laban said, “So, what will I pay you?” Jacob replied, “Go round through all your flocks, and separate all the sheep and goats that are speckled, brown and spotted. Those shall be my wages.” (Gen 30:31-32)

Laban agreed. Based on this arrangement, and using a clever breeding technique, Jacob became exceedingly rich. For his flocks of brown, speckled and spotted sheep and goats multiplied abundantly. His maid-servants and men-servants, camels and donkeys also increased, so that Laban’s sons became envious. Jacob talked to Rachel and Leah and said, “Your father’s attitude toward me is no longer the same today as yesterday. The angel of God said to me in my sleep, ‘Go out of this land and return into your native country.’”<sup>70</sup> So, they prepared to leave. Before they left, Rachel stole her father’s idols. Jacob’s entire family left without telling Laban. On the third day Laban found out, and he pursued them and overtook them in the mount of Gilead, where they pitched their tents. (Gen 30:34-31:25)

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<sup>70</sup> Altogether Jacob served Laban a total of twenty years (Gen 31:38) – seven years to marry Leah, seven years to marry Rachel, and another six years before he and his entire family left for Canaan.





**Fig 1.6.7 Jacob and His Family Leave for Canaan**

Artist: Filippo Lauri (1623-1694)

“Why would you run away secretly and not inform me,” asked Laban. “You have not allowed me to kiss my sons and daughters farewell. Now it is in my power to harm you, but the God of your father said to me yesterday, ‘Take heed that you do not speak harshly against Jacob.’” (Gen 31:26-29)

Laban further asked, “And why have you stolen away my gods?” Jacob answered, “That I departed without telling you was for fear that you would take away your daughters by force. But, as you accused me of theft, then try to find your gods among us, and let the thief be slain before our brothers. Search, and if you find any of your things with me, take them away.” When Jacob said this, he did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> The Bible did not say why Rachel stole her father’s idols, but it was probably to keep him from practicing idolatry.

So Laban went into the tent of Jacob, and of Leah, and of the handmaids, and did not find them. Laban then entered Rachel's tent, but Rachel had put the idols under the camel's saddle, and was sitting upon them. When Laban



**Fig 1.6.8 Rachel Sits on and Hides Laban's Idols**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770)

had searched all the tents and found nothing, Jacob said in a chiding manner, “For what fault of mine, and for what offense on my part have you so hotly pursued me and searched all my household stuff? What have you found that belongs to your house? Lay it here before my brothers and your brothers, and let them judge between you and me.” (Gen 31:30-37)

Laban answered him: “The daughters are mine, and the children, and your flocks, and all things that you see are mine. What can I do to my children and grandchildren? Come, therefore, let us just make a treaty, that it may serve as a testimony of the peace between you and me.” Thus, Jacob and Laban were reconciled. (Gen 31:43-44)



## Jacob Wrestles with an Angel

(Gen 32)

Jacob continued his journey to Canaan. Afraid that his brother Esau might still be angry with him, he sent messengers before him to Esau, and told them to give him this message: “Thus says your brother Jacob: I have stayed with Laban and have been with him until this day. Now I send a message to my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.” The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We went to your brother Esau, and behold he is coming hurriedly to meet you with four hundred men.” In his fear Jacob divided his people and animals into two camps, saying, “If Esau comes to one camp and destroys it, the other shall escape.” (Gen 32:1-8)

Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham and of my father Isaac, deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau, lest he comes and kills the mothers with the children.” Hoping to appease Esau, he prepared presents – goats, camels, bulls, donkeys, etc. – and sent them ahead to tell Esau that they were gifts for him from his brother Jacob. He himself lodged that night in the camp. He took his two wives and his two handmaids, with his eleven sons, across the shallow stream of Jabbok, and brought over all his possessions there, too. Then, when he was left alone, behold a man appeared and wrestled with him until morning. When the man saw that he could not prevail against him, he struck Jacob’s thigh muscle, and it contracted. The man said, “Let me go, for it is now daybreak.” Jacob replied, “No, unless you bless me.”<sup>72</sup> The man said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but **Israel**, for you wrestled with God and prevailed.”<sup>73</sup> Jacob named that place Peniel (which means “the face of God”), because there he said he saw God’s face and his soul had been saved. (Gen 32:9-30)

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<sup>72</sup> Jacob must have sensed that he was not wrestling with a mere man but with an angel.

<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the “man” who wrestled with Jacob was an angel in human form (Hos 12:4), and based on the way he spoke, he actually represented God Himself.



**Fig 1.6.9 Jacob Wrestles with an Angel**

Artist: Gustave Doré (1832-1883)



## COMMENTARY

1. In Holy Scripture names are often changed to match a person's new role or function. Thus, Abram's name was changed to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude," because Abraham was destined to be the father of many nations. In the story of Jacob, God (in the form of an angel) changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means "God contends," because Jacob struggled with God and prevailed.
2. Jacob's contest with the angel was God's way of encouraging him that if he could prevail against an angel, then he could prevail against any other man, including Esau.
3. Jacob's struggle with the angel may be viewed as a type or figure of the Church, which shall prevail against the attacks and persecutions of her enemies. Like Jacob, the Church will not yield, but will wrestle with the powers of hell until the end of time.

## Jacob Reconciles with Esau

(Gen 33, 35)

Lifting up his eyes, Jacob saw Esau coming, and with him four hundred men. Jacob went forward and bowed down seven times, until his brother came near. Then Esau ran to meet his brother and embraced him. Claspings him fast about the neck, Esau kissed him and wept. (Gen 33:1-4)



**Fig 1.6.10 Jacob and Esau Reconcile**

Artist: Francesco Hayez (1791-1882)

Esau said, “What are the droves that I met?” Jacob answered: “Those are my presents to you, that I might find favor before you, my lord.” But he said, “I have plenty, my brother, keep what is yours for yourself.” Jacob said, “I beg you, if I have found favor in your eyes, receive a little present at my hands. For I have seen your face, as if I have seen the face of God. Take the



blessing which I have brought you, and which God has given me.” Esau took it and went back that day to Seir. (Gen 33:8-16)

Jacob passed over to Shechem in the land of Canaan. There he purged his family of idols, and making an altar, he invoked upon it the most mighty God. Then he continued his journey. On his way to Bethlehem his youngest son, Benjamin, was born and his wife Rachel died. (Gen 35:3-19)



**Fig 1.6.11 The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel**

Artist: Gustav Ferdinand Metz (1817-1853)

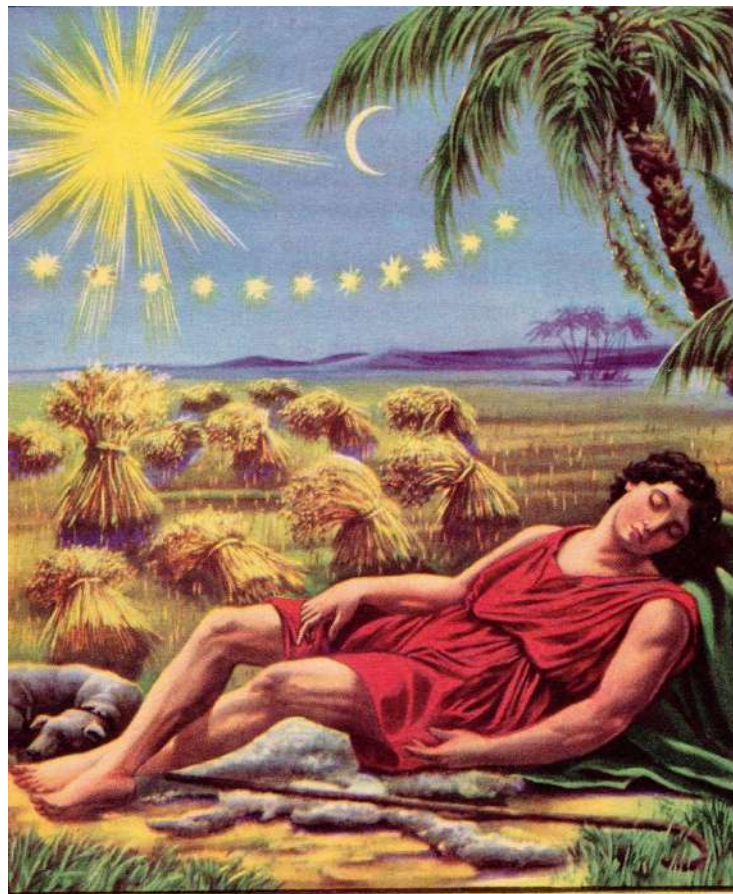
Jacob finally reached Mamre, the place where his father Isaac lived. When Isaac died, his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. (Gen 35:27-29)

## CHAPTER 7 THE STORY OF JOSEPH

### Joseph's Dreams (Gen 37:1-11)

Jacob (or Israel) loved Joseph above all his sons because he had him in his old age. To show his love he gave him a coat of many colors. Seeing that Joseph was loved by their father more than all his sons, his brothers hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. (Gen 37:3-4)

One day he told his brothers a dream that he had dreamed: “We were binding sheaves in the field and my sheaf arose and stood, while your sheaves standing about bowed down before my sheaf.” (Gen 37:5-7)



**Fig 1.7.1 Joseph's Dreams**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



His brothers answered, “Will you be our king? Will you rule over us?” Joseph’s dreams and words nourished his brothers’ hatred even more.

Then Joseph dreamed another dream, and said: “I saw in a dream the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to me.” When he told this to his father and brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What does this mean? Will I and your mother, and your brothers bow down before you?” His brothers envied him, but his father kept this to himself. (Gen 37:8-11)

### **Joseph Sold by His Brothers – (ca. 1898 B.C.)** (Gen 37:12-36)

One day Jacob sent Joseph to his brothers who were feeding the flocks. “Go,” he said, “and let me know how they are doing.” (Gen 37:12-14)

When the brothers saw him afar off, they thought of killing him and said to one another, “Behold the dreamer comes. Let us kill him and cast him into an old pit.” But Reuben, the eldest, endeavored to save him and said, “Cast him into this pit in the wilderness, but do not take away his life.” He said this because he wanted to bring Joseph back to his father. (Gen 37:18-22)

Reuben left. As soon as Joseph came to his brothers, they removed his outside coat, which was of different colors, and cast him into an old pit where there was no water. While sitting down to eat bread, they saw some Ishmaelite merchants on their way to Egypt. They were coming with their camels, and carrying spices, balm and myrrh. Judah said to his brothers, “What will it profit us to kill our brother and conceal his blood? It is better that we sell him to the Ishmaelites, and that our hands be not defiled, since he is our brother.” His brothers agreed. Therefore, they drew him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. The merchants took Joseph into Egypt. (Gen 37:23-28)



**Fig 1.7.2 Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers**

Returning to the pit, Reuben did not find Joseph. He tore his garments and went to his brothers, saying, “The boy is gone. Where shall I go?” The brothers took Joseph’s coat, dipped it in the blood of a young goat, and showed it to their father Israel, saying, “We found this. See whether it is your son’s coat or not.” Acknowledging it, Israel said, “It is my son’s coat, an evil, wild beast has eaten him. A beast has devoured Joseph.” Israel mourned for his son a long time. (Gen 37:29-34)

In Egypt the merchants who bought Joseph sold him to Potiphar, a captain of the pharaoh’s guards. (Gen 37:36)

### COMMENTARY

1. Joseph, who was hated by his brothers and sold by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver, was a figure of Jesus Christ, who was hated by his fellow Jews and sold by one of the Apostles, Judas Iscariot, for thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26:15).
2. The pharaoh is the title given to the *king* of Egypt. When Joseph came to Egypt (ca. 1897 or 1896 B.C.), the pharaoh was very likely SESOSTRIS II, based on Egyptian records. See the [List of Pharaohs](#) given in the Wikipedia.

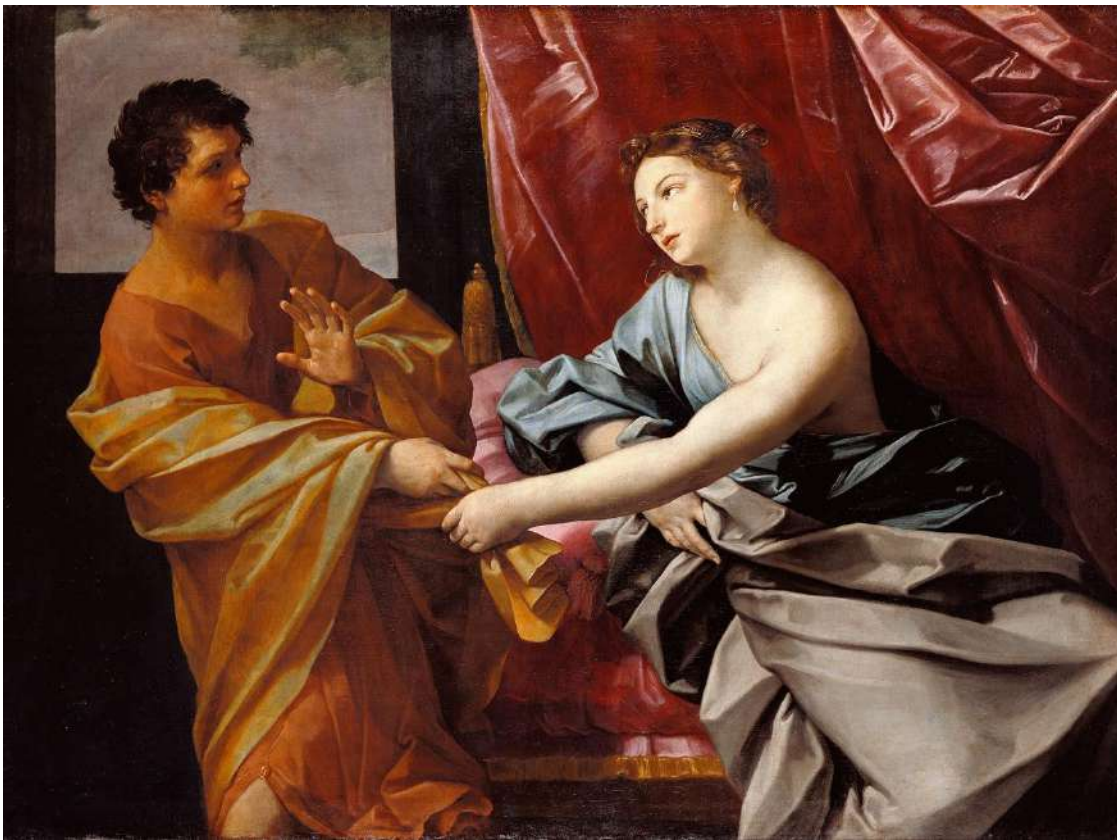


## Joseph in Prison

(Gen 39, 40)

Potiphar, a captain of the pharaoh's guards, was the Egyptian who bought Joseph from the Ishmaelite merchants to be his servant. Because the Lord was with Joseph, he became successful in everything he undertook. Potiphar noticed Joseph's special abilities, so he made Joseph chief servant of his house and also let him manage all of his possessions. (Gen 39:1-5)

Joseph was handsome, too, and Potiphar's wife had cast her eyes on Joseph. After some time, she said to him, "Sleep with me." Joseph replied, "Behold, my master trusted me. How then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" Day by day the woman persisted in her request, but Joseph refused the adultery. (Gen 39:6-10)



**Fig 1.7.3 Joseph and Potiphar's Wife**

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)



One day Joseph went into Potiphar's house to do some business. Catching the skirt of his garment, Potiphar's wife again said to him, "Lie with me." But he, leaving his garment in her hand, fled and went out. When the woman saw the garment in her hands, and herself ignored, she called the men in her house and said to them, "See, my husband brought in a Hebrew to abuse us. He came in to lie with me, but when I cried out and he heard my voice, he left his garment that I held, and got out." (Gen 39:11-15)

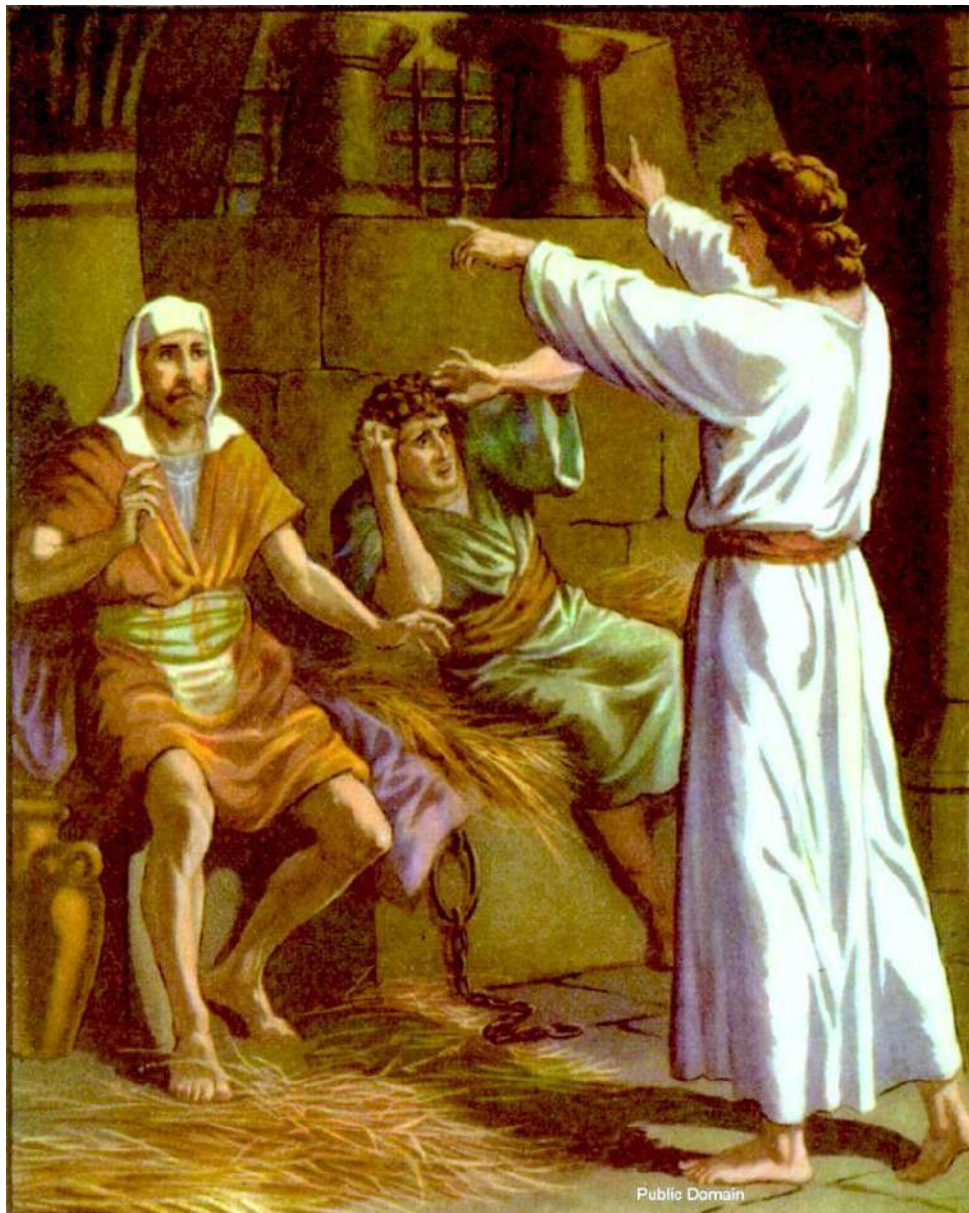
She kept the garment and showed it to her husband when he returned home. She said, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought here, came to abuse me. When he heard me cry, he left his garment which I held, and fled out." Hearing these things, and believing his wife's words, Potiphar was very angry and cast Joseph into the prison where the king's prisoners were kept. There Joseph was shut up. (Gen 39:16-20)

But the Lord was with Joseph, and the chief keeper of the prison began to trust him. The chief keeper put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners. Afterwards the chief butler and the chief baker of the pharaoh also became prisoners, and they, too, were put in Joseph's custody. (Gen 39:21-40:4)

One morning Joseph saw the two prisoners sad. He asked them, "Why are your faces sadder today than usual?" They answered, "We both have dreamed a dream, and there is nobody to interpret it to us." Joseph said to them, "Does not interpretation belong to God? Tell me what you have dreamed." (Gen 40:6-8)

The chief butler told his dream first: "I saw before me a vine on which were three branches. Little by little ripe grapes grew on the branches. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand. I took the grapes, pressed them into the cup, and gave the cup to pharaoh." (Gen 40:9-11)

Joseph answered: “This is the interpretation of the dream. The three branches are yet three days, after which the pharaoh will remember your service and will restore you to your former position. You shall present him the cup as you used to do when you were his butler. Remember me and do me this kindness, that you speak of me to pharaoh to take me out of this prison, for I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here without any fault I was cast into the dungeon.” (Gen 40:12-15)



**Fig 1.7.4 Joseph Interprets the Butler's and the Baker's Dreams**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

The chief baker seeing that he had wisely interpreted the butler's dream, said: "I also dreamed a dream, that I had three cake baskets upon my head. The topmost basket carried all sorts of pastries, but the birds ate them." Joseph answered: "This is the interpretation of the dream. The three baskets are yet three days after which the pharaoh will hang you and the birds will eat your flesh." (Gen 40:16-19)

The third day after this was the pharaoh's birthday. He made a great feast for his servants, and at the banquet remembered the chief butler and the chief baker. He restored the butler to his place to present him the cup, but the baker he hanged on a gibbet, thus making Joseph's interpretation true. But when things went well with him, the butler forgot to speak of Joseph to the pharaoh. (Gen 40:20-23)

### COMMENTARY

1. "Does not interpretation belong to God?" Joseph asked. Most dreams do not have a prophetic meaning, but supernatural dreams do. Since supernatural dreams come from God, who alone could see the future, their correct interpretation can also only come from God. Joseph had the divine gift of interpreting supernatural dreams correctly.
2. Joseph with the two prisoners, one of whom was saved and the other killed, was a figure of Jesus crucified between two thieves, one of whom received the promise of Paradise, but the other did not.

## **The Pharaoh's Dream**

(Gen 41:1-36)

Two years later the pharaoh also had a dream. He dreamed that he stood by the river, out of which came up seven cows, very beautiful and fat. Seven other cows also came up out of the river, ugly and lean. These lean and ugly cows devoured the seven beautiful and fat cows, so the pharaoh awoke. He slept again, and dreamed another dream: Seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk full and fair. Then seven other ears of corn sprung up thin and blasted, and these devoured the seven beautiful ones. (Gen 41:1-7)

When morning came the pharaoh, being struck with fear, called all the interpreters of Egypt and all the wise men. He told them his dream, but there was not one that could interpret it. (Gen 41:7-8)

At last, the chief butler remembered Joseph, and told the pharaoh how Joseph interpreted his and the baker's dreams. Immediately the pharaoh commanded to bring Joseph before him. They took Joseph out of prison, groomed him, and after changing his apparel, they brought him in to the pharaoh. (Gen 41:9-14)

Pharaoh told Joseph his dream, and Joseph answered: "The king's dream is one. The seven beautiful cows and the seven full ears of corn both have the same meaning in the dream. They mean seven years of plenty. The seven lean cows that came up after them, and the seven thin ears of corn that followed, are seven years of famine to come. Behold, there shall come seven years of great plenty in the whole land of Egypt. After which there shall follow seven years of famine, so great that all the abundance before will be forgotten, for the famine will consume all the land, and the greatness of the scarcity will destroy the greatness of the plenty." (Gen 41:15-31)





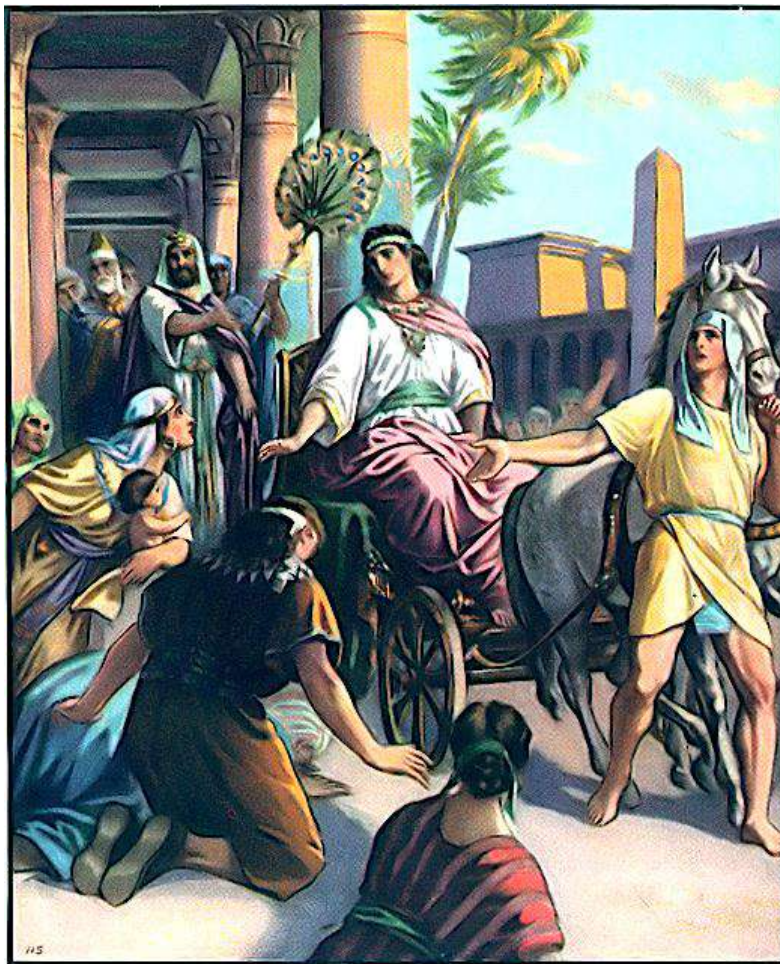
**Fig 1.7.5 Joseph Interprets the Pharaoh's Dreams**

Artist: Reginald Arthur (1862-1930)

“Now, therefore,” continued Joseph, “let Pharaoh choose a wise and industrious man, and make him ruler over the land of Egypt, that he may appoint overseers over all the land, and gather into barns the fifth part of all the produce during the seven fruitful years that will come. Let all the grains be laid up under Pharaoh’s hands, and be reserved in the cities. Let it be in readiness against the famine of seven years to come, which will oppress Egypt, but the land will not be consumed by scarcity.” (Gen 41:33-36)

## Joseph, Governor of Egypt – (ca, 1885 B.C.) (Gen 41:37-57)

Joseph's counsel pleased the pharaoh and all his servants. Pharaoh said to them, "Can we find another man that is full of the spirit of God?" He said to Joseph, "Seeing God has shown you all that you have said, you shall rule over my house. At your command all the people shall obey. Only in the kingly throne will I be above you." He took his ring from his own hand, and gave it to Joseph. He put upon him a robe of silk, and put a chain of gold about his neck. He made him go up into his second chariot, the crier proclaiming that all should bow their knee before him, and that they should know he was made governor over the whole land of Egypt. (Gen 41:37-43)



**Fig 1.7.6 Joseph, Governor of Egypt**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953), after Carolsfeld



The king said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh. Without your command no man shall move hand or foot in the land of Egypt.” He changed his name and called him in Egyptian language, “the savior of the world.” (Gen 41:44-45)

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before the pharaoh, and he went around all of Egypt. The fruitfulness of the seven years came. The crop being bound up into sheaves, was gathered together into the barns of Egypt. The excess grain was stored in every city. There was so great an abundance of wheat that it was equal to the sand of the sea, and the grains could not be counted. (Gen 41:46-49)

Before the famine came Joseph had two sons born. He called the firstborn Manasseh, and the second Ephraim. (Gen 41:50-52)

Now when the seven years of plenty that had been in Egypt passed, the seven years of scarcity, which Joseph had foretold, came. The famine prevailed in the whole world, but there was food in the granaries of Egypt. When the Egyptians began to be famished, they cried to pharaoh for food. He said to them, “Go to Joseph and do all that he tells you.” The famine increased daily in the land, so Joseph opened the barns and sold the grains to the Egyptians. Soon the entire world also came to Egypt to buy food, and to seek some relief for their hunger. (Gen 41:53-57)

## COMMENTARY

1. The pharaoh called Joseph “Savior of the World” (Gen 41:45). This made Joseph a figure of Jesus Christ, but with this difference: while Joseph saved the world by giving them material food, Christ saved the world by giving them spiritual food, that is, His own Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
2. The new pharaoh during the time of the famine was SESOSTRIS III, who became very powerful.

## Joseph Reunited with His Brothers – (ca. 1876 B.C.) (Gen 42-46)

Hearing that food was sold in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons: “I have heard that wheat is sold in Egypt. Go there and buy some, that we may live and not be consumed with hunger.” (Gen 42:1-2)

The ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt while Benjamin was kept at home with Jacob. Joseph was now governor in the land of Egypt. When his brothers bowed down to him, he knew them, but they did not recognize him.<sup>74</sup> Remembering the dreams which formerly he had dreamed, he pretended that he did not know them and said, “You are spies. You came to view the weaker parts of the land.” But they said, “No, my lord. We are here to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are twelve brothers, but the youngest is with our father, and the other is dead.” (Gen 42:3-13)

Joseph put them in prison for three days. The third day he brought them out of prison and said, “Do as I say, and you will live. If you be peaceable men, let one of your brothers remain in prison, while the rest of you go your way. Carry the grains that you have bought into your houses, but bring your youngest brother to me, that I may find your words to be true, and you may not die.” He took Simeon to prison and released the others. When the brothers told Jacob what the governor wanted, he said, “Benjamin shall not go down with you. If any mischief should befall him in Egypt, you would bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to *Sheol*.”<sup>75</sup> (Gen 42:17-38)

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<sup>74</sup> They did not recognize Joseph because he was dressed like one of the Egyptians, and was already thirty years old (Gen 41:46) when he became governor. He was only sixteen years old (Gen 37:2) when they sold him to the Ishmaelite merchants.

<sup>75</sup> “Sheol” is the Hebrew word for the underworld, or the abode of the dead. It is sometimes translated as “hell,” but it is not the hell of the damned, but the hell of the just, where they waited for redemption.





**Fig 1.7.7 Joseph's Brothers Bow to Joseph and Do Not Recognize Him**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

In the meantime, the famine became heavy upon the land. When they had eaten all the grain which they had brought out of Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, “Go again, and buy us a little food.” Judah answered “The governor strictly told us, ‘You shall not see me, unless you bring your youngest brother with you.’” (Gen 43:1-3)

Israel finally agreed to let Benjamin go: “If it must be so, do what you will. Take the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry them down with you as presents to the governor.” The brothers took Benjamin and the presents, went down into Egypt, and stood before Joseph. (Gen 43:11-15)

When Joseph had seen them, and Benjamin with them, he commanded the steward of his house, saying: “Bring the men into the house and prepare a feast, because they shall eat with me at noon.” The steward did as he was commanded, and brought the men into the house. He also brought Simeon out to them. (Gen 43:16-23)

Lifting up his eyes, Joseph saw Benjamin, his brother by the same mother, and said, “Is this your young brother, of whom you told me?” Then he told Benjamin, “God be gracious to you, my son.” Because his heart was moved in seeing his brother, he hurriedly went into his room and wept there. When he had washed his face, coming out again, he controlled himself and began to eat. They all drank and were merry with him. (Gen 43:29-34)

At night Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, “Fill their sacks with grain, as much as they can hold, and put each one’s money in the top of his sack. But put my silver cup in the sack of the youngest, together with the money which he paid for the wheat.” It was so done. (Gen 44:1-2)

When morning came, the brothers departed out of the city and headed back to Canaan. They had not gone far yet when Joseph sent for the steward of his house, and said, “Arise. Pursue the men, and when you have overtaken them, say: ‘You have stolen my lord’s silver cup.’” (Gen 44:3-5)



The steward did as he was told. The brothers denied the allegation and insisted that they be searched. The steward opened their sacks beginning with the eldest, and ending with the youngest. He found the cup in Benjamin's sack. (Gen 44:6-12)



**Fig 1.7.8 The Steward Finds the Silver Cup in Benjamin's Sack**

Artist: Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov (1806-1858)

The brothers rent their garments, and loading their donkeys again, returned into the town. Judah at the head of his brothers went to Joseph, and they all together fell down before him on the ground. (Gen 44:13-14)



Judah said to him, “What shall we say, my lord? How can we clear ourselves? God has exposed our guilt to you. Behold, we are all your slaves now, both we, and he with whom the cup was found.” Joseph answered: “God forbid that I should do so. He that stole the cup alone shall be my servant. The rest of you may go away free to your father.” (Gen 44:16-17)

Then Judah coming closer, said boldly, “I beg you, my lord, let your servant speak. If I go to our father, and the boy be not with us, he will die of grief. Therefore, let me be your proper servant instead, and let the boy go up with his brothers. I cannot return to my father without the boy, lest I be a witness of the calamity that will oppress him.” (Gen 44:18-34)



**Fig 1.7.9 Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers**

Artist: François Gérard (1770-1837)

Joseph could no longer control himself before the many that stood by. He commanded everyone to go out, and that no stranger be present when he made himself known to his brothers. He lifted up his voice weeping, and the Egyptians and all the house of Pharaoh heard him say to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Come nearer to me. I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.” (Gen 45:1-4)

“God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation,” continued Joseph, “that you may be preserved upon the earth, and may have food to live. So, it was not by your planning that I was brought here, but by the will of God, who has made me as it were a father to Pharaoh, and lord of his whole house, and governor in all the land of Egypt.” (Gen 45:5-8)

Joseph told his brothers to go back to Canaan and ask their father to relocate to Egypt, for there were yet five years of famine remaining. “Tell my father of all my glory,” said Joseph, “and all things that you have seen in Egypt. Hurry, and bring him to me.” (Gen 45:9-13)

Falling upon the neck of his brother Benjamin, he embraced him and wept. In like manner Benjamin wept on his neck. Joseph kissed all his brothers, and wept upon every one of them. (Gen 45:14-15)

News of Joseph’s actions and fame spread and reached the king’s court. The pharaoh with all his family was glad, and even gave orders to help Joseph’s family to relocate to Egypt. “Leave nothing of your household stuff,” the pharaoh said, “for all the riches of Egypt shall be yours.” The sons of Jacob did as they were told. When Jacob found out the real story about Joseph, he said, “It is enough. My son Joseph is alive. I will go and see him before I die.” (Gen 45:16-28)

Jacob (or Israel), his entire family – his sons’ wives and children – and all their flocks and cattle, prepared to move. He sent Judah ahead to tell Joseph that he would meet him in Goshen. Joseph made his chariot ready, and went up to meet his father in Goshen. Seeing him, he fell upon his neck, and embracing him, wept. The father said to Joseph, “Now I shall die with joy, because I have seen your face, and leave you alive.” (Gen 46:1-30)

Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s family, “I will go up, and tell Pharaoh that you have arrived. When Pharaoh calls you and asks what your occupation is, tell him that you are all shepherds, in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, because the Egyptians have a horror of shepherds.” (Gen 46:31-34)



## Jacob Meets Pharaoh

(Gen 47-50)

Joseph went in and told Pharaoh that his father and the whole clan had arrived. The pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Make them dwell in the best place, and give them the land of Goshen.” After this Joseph brought his father in and presented him to Pharaoh. Jacob blessed the pharaoh and went out. (Gen 47:1-10)



**Fig 1.7.10 Joseph Presents His Father to Pharaoh**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Jacob lived in Goshen for 17 years, and his age came to a total of 147 years (Gen 47:28). When he saw that his death was coming close, he called Joseph and said to him, “If I have found favor in your sight, do me this favor. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me sleep with my fathers. Take me out of this land and bury me in the burying place of my ancestors.”<sup>76</sup> Joseph swore that he would.<sup>77</sup> (Gen 47:29-31)

When Jacob was dying, Joseph took his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to visit his father. Jacob saw the boys and blessed them. (Gen 48:1-15)



**Fig 1.7.11 Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons**

Artist: Benjamin West (1738-1820)

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<sup>76</sup> That means, in the land of Canaan.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph did bury Jacob in the land of Canaan. Even the elders of Pharaoh's household attended the burial ceremonies. (Gen 50:5-13)



Then he called his own sons and blessed them. To Judah he made this remarkable prophecy: “Your brothers will praise you. Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; the sons of your father shall bow down to you... *The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah until He comes that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation<sup>78</sup> of nations.*” (Gen 49:8-10)<sup>79</sup>

Now, Joseph himself dwelt in Egypt for a long time. Before his death he also made this prophecy to his brothers: “God will visit you after my death, and will make you go out of this land, to the land which He swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... Carry my bones with you when you get out of this place<sup>80</sup>” Joseph lived to the age of 110 years.<sup>81</sup> Being embalmed, he was laid in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen 50:23-25)

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<sup>78</sup> New Bible translations do not say, “He shall be the expectation of nations,” as the Douay does. Instead, they say that “to him shall be the *obedience* of all nations,” thus losing the messianic point of the prophecy. Perhaps an argument can be made to support this new translation based on our present understanding of Hebrew phraseology. However, all the ancient translations – the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate – which were translations from the Hebrew made by scholars who lived closer to the time when Hebrew was still spoken, and who had a better understanding of the various nuances of meaning in Hebrew phraseology, agree that the sense of the original Hebrew statement was that He who was to come would be “the **expectation of nations**.” Likewise, the early Christians and Church Fathers understood the messianic overtones of Gen 49:10 because He who was to come, was the One expected by all nations, and whom all nations shall obey.

<sup>79</sup> This prophecy is important. For it predicted the time when the Messiah, the Christ, would appear on earth. Judah will first rule over his brothers, and the scepter will not be taken away from the Kingdom of Judah until the Christ comes. (See Commentary, #2.)

<sup>80</sup> Joseph’s prophecy predicted the Exodus, when all the Hebrews left Egypt to go to the Promised Land. The Israelites did carry Joseph’s bones out of Egypt during the Exodus, and transferred them to Shechem in Canaan (Jos 24:32).

<sup>81</sup> The Israelites stayed in Egypt after the death of Joseph (ca. 1806 B.C.). According to Ex 12:40 the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years until Moses, by God’s command, led them out of Egypt.



## COMMENTARY

1. Many bible critics had declared that the story of Joseph was only a legend because up until recently archaeologists found no physical evidence of Israelites being at one time in Egypt as the Bible says. The critics also claimed that because Egyptologists could find only a handful of Israelites in Egypt in 1300 B.C., the so-called mass Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt was just a myth. However, the problem here is one of chronology. In 1 Kgs 6:1, it is stated that the Exodus happened 480 years before the fourth year of King Solomon (c. 966 B.C.). This puts the year of the Exodus at 1446 B.C., not at 1300 B.C. as the Egyptologists stipulated. The Egyptologists did not find very many Israelites in Egypt in 1300 B.C. because the Israelites had already left! Had they used the Bible's chronology and searched for Israelite settlements in Egypt in an earlier period, then they would have discovered the large population of Hebrew slaves prior to, and during the time of, Moses. They also would have situated Joseph properly as belonging to the 19th, rather than to the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In fact, extensive excavations made in 1966 by Prof. Manfred Bietak at Tell el-Daba (east of the Nile Delta) disclosed new archaeological evidences of Hebrew settlement in Goshen (later called the City of Ramesses). See *Israelites in Egypt*. Also, see *Is the Biblical Story of Joseph in Egypt Verified?*
2. Jacob's prophecy was remarkable, not only because it predicted that the tribe of Judah would rule Israel, but also because it gave a timeframe for the coming of the promised Redeemer. Jacob made this prophecy in 1859 B.C. It actually took another 850 years before the tribe of Judah gained leadership of Israel, beginning with the reign of King David. Since then, the scepter was held by the tribe of Judah until the coming of Christ. Of course, the Kingdom of Judah lost political power when Israel was dominated by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Syrians and the Romans, but the "scepter" remained with Judah during those turbulent times because it retained tribal leadership among the Jews through the work of the prophets, who exercised moral authority among them. It was only in 40 B.C., when the Romans appointed Herod the Great to be king of Israel, that the scepter was truly lost, because Herod was not a Hebrew but an Edomite.

## CHAPTER 8 THE STORY OF JOB<sup>82</sup>

There was a man in the land of Uz,<sup>83</sup> whose name was Job. The man was simple and upright, God-fearing and avoiding evil. He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred oxen, five hundred donkeys, and had a big family. (Job 1:1-3)

One day God spoke to the sons of God,<sup>84</sup> and Satan was among them. The Lord said to Satan, “Have you seen my servant, Job? There is none like him on earth. He is simple and upright, God-fearing and avoids evil.” Satan replied, “That’s because you have protected him and his family, blessed the work of his hands, and increased his possessions on the earth. But treat him a little harshly and see if he doesn’t curse you to your face.” The Lord then said to Satan, “Behold, do what you wish to his possessions, but do not touch his body.” Satan left from the presence of the Lord. (Job 1:6-12)

Soon afterward, when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their eldest brother, a messenger came to Job to tell him that the Sabeans<sup>85</sup> had taken all his oxen and donkeys, and had killed all his servants. And while he was yet speaking, another messenger came to Job to tell him that lightning from heaven had struck all his sheep and shepherds and that he, the messenger, alone escaped to tell him. And while he also was yet speaking a third messenger came and said that the Chaldeans<sup>86</sup> took away all his camels and slew the servants who were looking after them. He was yet speaking when a fourth messenger also came in and said, “While your

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<sup>82</sup> The story probably happened during the time of Joseph because the *Septuagint*, an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, contains an updated final verse that affirms Job to be a grandson of Esau and a king of Edom. See [Brenton Septuagint Translation](#) of Job 42:17b-17e.

<sup>83</sup> A part of Edom (Lam 4:21) in Arabia.

<sup>84</sup> The “sons of God” in this context refer to the angels in Heaven.

<sup>85</sup> A nomadic predatory tribe in Arabia.

<sup>86</sup> Another nomadic predatory tribe that came from the southern part of Babylon, which is now Iraq.

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sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the house of their eldest brother, a violent wind shook the house, and the whole house collapsed, killing all your sons and daughters.” Instead of being angry at God, Job fell down upon the ground and worshipped, saying: “*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away... blessed be the name of the Lord.*” (Job 1:13-21)

Once more Satan stood in the sight of God. The Lord said to Satan, “Didn’t you see that Job is still keeping his innocence?” But Satan replied, “Job remained innocent because I could not hurt his body. But let me touch his bone and his flesh, and you will see how he would curse you.” Then God said, “Very well, he is in your hand, but save his life.” (Job 2:1-6)

Satan left the presence of the Lord and struck Job with the most painful sores that covered his body from the sole of the foot to the top of his head. As he sat among the ashes his wife chided him, saying, “Do you still keep your innocence?” Job answered and said, “You talk foolishly. If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?” In spite of his sufferings, no evil word came from Job’s lips. (Job 2:7-10)

At this point three of Job’s friends came to visit him. They were Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. They did not at first recognize Job when they saw him, then they wept at his condition. They sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights without speaking to him, for they saw how great was his grief. (Job 2:11-13).

After seven days, Job began talking of his sorrows, “Let the day perish wherein I was born... let that day be turned into darkness... because it did not seal the doors of the womb that bore me...” (Job 3:3, 4, 10). However, Eliphaz thought that his sufferings were a punishment from God for his sins. “Blessed is the man whom God corrects,” he said. “Refuse not, therefore, the chastising of the Lord” (Job 5:17).





**Fig 1.8.1 Job and His Friends<sup>87</sup>**

Artist: Ilya Repin (1844-1930)

Job insisted that he was innocent and had done no wrong, which is why his punishment seemed so severe. “O that my sins, whereby I have deserved wrath, and the calamity that I suffer, were weighed in a balance.”<sup>88</sup> (Job 6:1) He challenged his friends to show him where his sin was: “Answer, I beg you, and judge me. You shall not find evil in my tongue, nor the sound of folly in my mouth.” (Job 6:29-30).

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<sup>87</sup> In the picture the woman behind Job was his wife. With the sores in his body Job was considered a leper. Thus, the artist rightly depicts him living on the outskirts of the village and apart from his fellowmen.

<sup>88</sup> Job wished that his alleged “sins” and his sufferings could be weighed in a balance, for it would show that his misery was way out of proportion to the gravity of his “sins.”

The debate between Job and his friends continued for several chapters in the *Book of Job*. Job affirmed that God is quite just, although He treats the innocent harshly (Job 9). Yet, he trusted God's justice, for in the end He was the one who would raise him up and restore him: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh, I shall see my God, whom my eyes shall behold."*<sup>89</sup> (Job 19:25-26).



**Fig1.8.2 The Patient Job Makes a Prophecy**

Artist: Gerard Seghers (1591-1651)

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<sup>89</sup> Apparently, God granted Job the gift of prophecy on account of his great confidence in Him. The biblical text shows Job's explicit belief in the Savior to come, and his hope and belief in the general resurrection.

Referring to the sudden loss of Job's wealth and family, Zophar claimed that such was precisely the sign that Job had sinned, for the prosperity of the wicked is short lived, and their downfall sudden (Job 20). Job responded by saying that in this world the wicked often succeed and prosper also, sometimes even to the end of their life, because their punishment is reserved for the next life: "The wicked man is reserved to the day of destruction, and he shall be brought to the day of wrath"<sup>90</sup> (Job 21:30).

Bildad, too, thought that Job must have a sin because no one is pure before God. "How can man be just before God?" he asked. "Behold, even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less a man who is but a waste, and the son of man who is a worm" (Job 25:4-6). But Job insisted that he was righteous, and even proceeded to give an account of his virtues. (Job 31)

Now Elihu, a young bystander listening to them, joined the conversation. He blamed Job's friends for failing to answer Job's arguments (Job 32:3). He also blamed Job for asserting that he was just before God (Job 33:9), yet complained of the sufferings that came from the hand of God (Job 34). Elihu then spoke of God's wisdom and wonderful works, and how men should simply fear him, even if they appear to themselves as wise. (Job 37:14-24)

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<sup>90</sup> Job's argument was therefore this: as prosperity in life is not necessarily an indication of one's virtue, so the loss of prosperity is not an necessarily an indication of one's sin.



Finally, God intervened. Out of a whirlwind He spoke and told Job that his mind could not comprehend the power and wisdom with which He created and rules the world:

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding. Who has laid its measures, or stretched the line upon it...? Can you bring forth the day star in its time, and make the evening star rise upon the children of the earth? Do you know the laws of heaven, and can you establish their rule on the earth? (Job 38:4-5, 32-33)

“Do you know the time when the wild goats give birth among the rocks, or have you observed the deer when they bring forth their young? Have you numbered the months that they carry their young or do you know the time when they deliver?... Does the hawk soar by your wisdom, and spread her wings to travel south? Will the eagle fly up at your command, and make her nest in high places?” (Job 39:1-2, 26-27)

The Lord went on, and said to Job:

“Shall he who debates with God be so easily silenced? Surely, he who criticizes God ought to answer him.” (Job 40:1-2)

Seeing that his limited understanding was unable to penetrate the depth of God’s wisdom, Job realized that he ought not to question the reasons for God’s wise designs, but must simply bow down to the Will of Almighty God and humbly accept the harsh treatment that comes from His providential hand. Job repented and did penance for having spoken so unwisely, and also asked God pardon for the folly of his friends. (Job 42:1-10)



**Fig 1.8.3 Job Is Restored to Prosperity**

Artist: Laurent de La Hyre (1606-1656)

God accepted Job's penance and He gave him twice the amount of riches that he had before. His brothers and sisters came to dine with him, and every man gave him one ewe<sup>91</sup> and one earring of gold. He now had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand oxen and a thousand donkeys. New children, – seven sons and three daughters, – were born to him, and he lived for a hundred forty years. (Job 42:11-16)

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<sup>91</sup> A ewe (pronounced like 'you') is a female sheep.

## COMMENTARY

1. Job was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ who suffered sorrow and pain, but did not complain. The story also shows how far God sometimes allows the devil to torment and tempt us.
2. The *Book of Job* is regarded as one of the Wisdom Books because of its doctrinal content, which beautifully highlights the wisdom and power of God, as well as His providential character. However, nothing else in the book indicates that the story is purely moral and not also historical. At least some sacred writers referred to Job as a real person. For example, the prophet Ezekiel cited Job along with Noah and Daniel (Ez 14: 14, 20). And St. James used Job to illustrate the happiness of those who persevered (Jas 5:11). But some scholars doubt the historicity of the story because it contained a dialogue between God and Satan, which could not possibly be witnessed by a human writer. However, this objection is weak because the true Author of Holy Scripture is not man, but God.
3. Many bible scholars date the *Book of Job* to the 6th Century B.C. However, a number of internal evidences indicate a much earlier date. For example, the setting is patriarchal: (a) Job's wealth is given in terms of livestock instead of silver or gold (Job 1:3; 42:12), and (b) there are no references to Israel, Exodus, the Mosaic Law, etc. Therefore, the book was likely written during the Age of the Patriarchs. In fact, the story probably happened around the time of Joseph because the *Septuagint*, an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, contains an updated final verse that affirms Job to be a grandson of Esau. See *Brenton Septuagint Translation of Job* 42:17b-17e. The final verse also indicated that Job's friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar – were *kings* of small territories in Arabia.
4. There has also been some controversy regarding the authorship of the book. Rabbinic tradition points to Moses as the translator or compiler of the book. For, the text was interspersed with many Arabic and Chaldaic idioms, which led many to speculate that the author (who could be Job himself) wrote the book originally in Arabic and was only later translated by Moses into Hebrew.



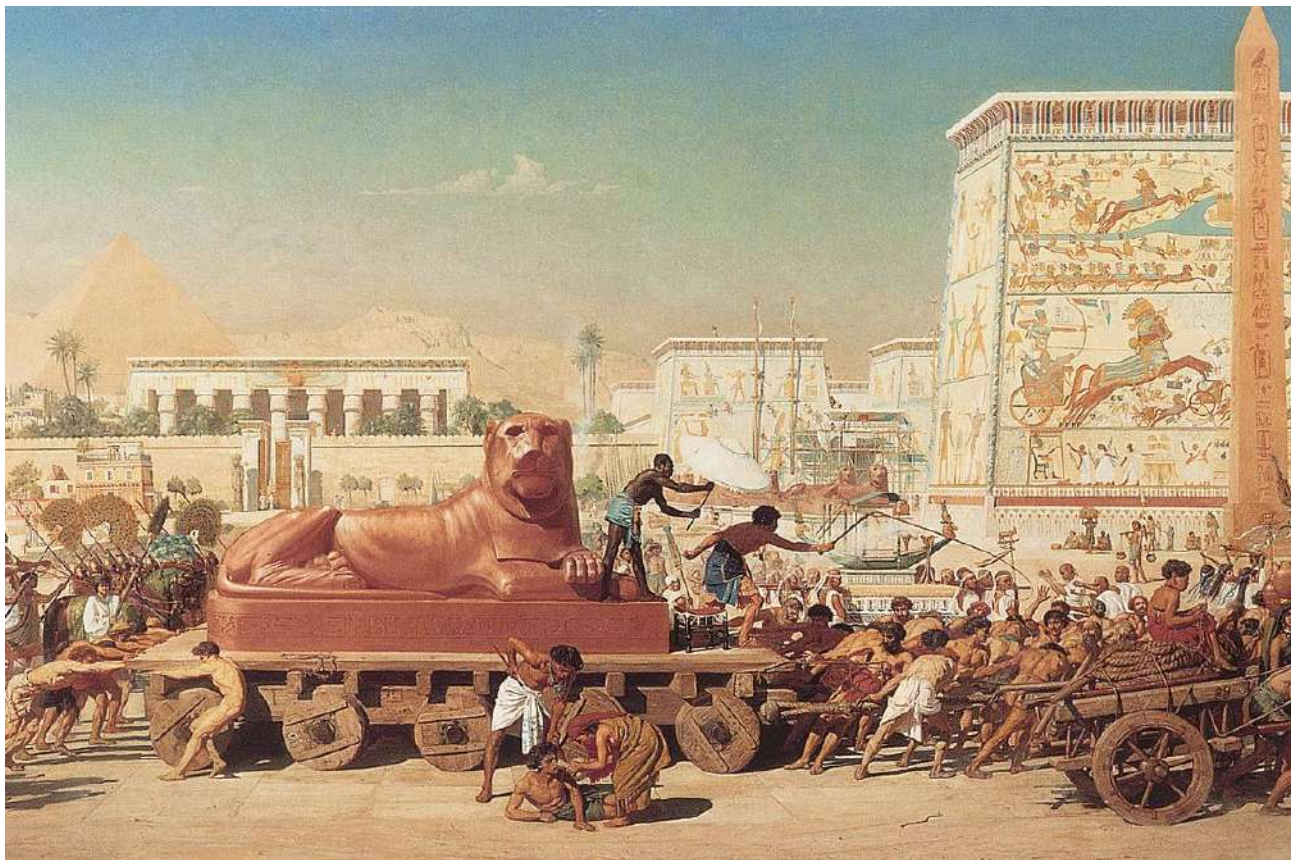
# **My Free Bible History: The Old Testament**

## *Part Two From Moses to the Death of King Solomon*

## CHAPTER 1 THE STORY OF MOSES

### **The Birth of Moses** – (ca. 1525 B.C.) (Ex 1:7-22; 2:1-10)

After the death of Joseph, the Israelites in Egypt increased rapidly until they spread over the land of Egypt. In the meantime there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. Noticing how the people of Israel had grown numerous and strong, he said, “Come let us oppress them, lest they multiply.” Therefore, he set over the Israelites taskmasters to load them with heavy work. (Ex 1:7-11)



**Fig 2.1.1 Egyptian Taskmasters Oppress the Israelites with Hard Labor**  
From a painting by Edward Poynter (1836-1919)

But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Hebrew slaves increased in number. Pharaoh therefore commanded all his people: “Throw every male child born to the Hebrews into the Nile River, but save every female child.” (Ex 1:12, 22)

One woman, hoping to save her infant son, took a wicker basket, sealed it with tar, put her little baby in it, and laid him in the reeds<sup>92</sup> by the river’s edge. Miriam, the baby’s sister,<sup>93</sup> stood afar off to watch him and see what would happen. (Ex 2:1-4)



**Fig 2.1.2 Miriam Watches Baby Moses Drift among the Reeds**

Artist unknown.

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<sup>92</sup> “Reeds” are tall, grass-like plants that grow in water or on marshy ground.

<sup>93</sup> The baby would later be named “Moses.” The name of his sister was *Miriam* (from Num 26:59), which is a Hebrew name for Mary.



Behold, the daughter of pharaoh came down to wash herself in the river, while her maids walked by the river's edge. When she saw the basket in the reeds, she ordered one of her maids to bring it to her. The basket was brought to her. Seeing the infant crying, and having compassion on it, she said, "This is one of the Hebrew babies." (Ex 2:5-6)



**Fig 2.1.3 Egyptian Maid Shows the Basket with Baby Moses to Pharaoh's Daughter**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Miriam approached the pharaoh's daughter and offered to get a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby. When the pharaoh's daughter said, "Go," she went and called her mother. The pharaoh's daughter said to the woman, "Take this child and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." The woman took the child and nursed him. When he was old enough to be separated, she brought him to the pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him and called him *Moses*, which means "saved from the water." (Ex 2:7-10)

## COMMENTARY

1. Moses was in many ways also a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, as Moses was saved from the cruel command of the pharaoh, Christ was saved from the cruelty of King Herod. As Moses showed the Chosen People the way to the Promised Land, Christ showed us the way to Heaven. As Moses gave the Old Law to the Jews, Christ gave the New Law to the world. And, as Moses fed the people with manna in the desert, Christ feeds us with the Living Bread of the Eucharist.
2. That Moses was adopted by the pharaoh's daughter was the work of Divine Providence. By being put in this royal position, Moses was trained and educated as a prince in the pharaoh's court. There he acquired the arts and wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). This enabled him, not only to face the pharaoh and fulfill his calling to deliver the Jews out of Egypt, but also to write the first five books of Holy Scripture: *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*. Collectively the first five books of the Bible are called the *Pentateuch* (from the Greek word "pente" which means five, and "teuchos" which means scroll). Probably, Moses was not the sole writer of the Pentateuch because there were also later editors who made revisions and additions to the text. But **Moses was the original human source or writer of the first five books**, as the Pentateuch itself says (See Ex 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27; Lev 6:8-9; Num 33:2; Deut 31:9, 22, 24). In the Gospels our Lord Jesus also confirmed that the Laws originated from Moses (See Matt 8:4; 19:7-8; 22:24; Mark 7:10; 10:3; 12:26; Luke 24:44; John 1:17; 5:46-47; 7:19-23).
3. Some bible critics claimed that Moses could not possibly have written the *Pentateuch* because they assumed that the art of writing had not yet been invented during the time of Moses. However, the so-called "black stele," excavated in 1901 by Jacques de Morgan from a site in Susa, Iran, disclosed the famous Code of Hammurabi, containing 4000 lines of text chiseled in the stele, and encoding the ancient laws of Babylon! This artifact antedated Moses by at least three hundred years. See *Code of Hammurabi: Ancient Babylonian Laws*. Also, the inscriptions in the EBLA Tablets date at least a thousand years before Moses, indubitably proving again that written language was no longer a new invention at the time of Moses. See *EBLA Tablets*.

## The Call of Moses

(Ex 2 - 4 )

When Moses was 40 years old,<sup>94</sup> he began to share the sorrows of his fellow Hebrews. One day he saw an Egyptian strike one of the Hebrews. He killed the Egyptian<sup>95</sup> and hid him in the sand. But his act was known by others. And when the pharaoh heard of this, he sought to kill Moses. Moses fled and lived in the land of Midian<sup>96</sup> (Ex 2:11-15).

One day Moses was resting beside a well. The seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, came to give drink to their sheep. But some shepherds came and began driving them away. Moses stood up and defended them against the shepherds. When the daughters of Jethro came home, they told their father how Moses helped them. “Where is he?” Jethro asked. “Invite him that he may eat bread with us.” Pleased with Jethro’s hospitality, Moses decided to live with them. Later Moses married Jethro’s daughter, Zipporah, and lived in Midian for many years tending Jethro’s flocks. (Ex 2:16-22)

In Egypt the children of Israel continued to be oppressed by the Egyptians. God heard their groaning and remembered the covenant which He made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Ex 2:23-25)

One day Moses led Jethro’s flock to graze near Mount Horeb. There he saw a flame of fire coming out of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but was not being burnt. When he went forward to see this marvelous sight, an angel of the Lord<sup>97</sup> appeared in a flame of fire from the bush and said, “Moses, Moses. Do not come closer. Take off the shoes from your feet,

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<sup>94</sup> See Acts 7:23.

<sup>95</sup> That is, to defend his fellow Hebrew (Acts 7:24).

<sup>96</sup> Midian, a place in Arabia.

<sup>97</sup> “Angelus Domini” from the Nova Vulgata (Ex 3:1).



for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”<sup>98</sup> Moses hid his face, for he dared not look at God. The Lord continued, “I have seen the sufferings of my people in the hands of the Egyptians. I have come to deliver them from their taskmasters, and to bring them into a land that flows with milk and honey. Go to Pharaoh, and ask him to let the children of Israel go out of Egypt.” (Ex 3:1-10)



**Fig 2.1.4 The Call of Moses from the Burning Bush**  
An Illustration from *Bible Primer, Old Testament*

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<sup>98</sup> An angel appeared in a flame out of the bush, but it was God who spoke in him. See Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, *Four Discourses against the Arians*, Discourse III, Ch. 25, #14.

Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?” God said to him, “I will be with you. And after you have brought My people out of Egypt, you shall offer sacrifice to God upon this mountain as a sign that it was I who sent you.” Moses said to God, “Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ If they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO AM.”<sup>99</sup> Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘I AM’ has sent me to you.” (Ex 3:11-14)

Moses replied, “They will not believe me, nor listen to my voice.” God asked Moses, “What do you have in your hand?” He answered, “A rod.” God told him to throw his rod upon the ground. The rod turned into a serpent. When God asked him to pick up the serpent by its tail, it became a rod again. God said that by this and similar miracles, the Israelites would believe him. “If they still will not believe, take water from the river and pour it out upon the dry land. The water will turn into blood.” (Ex 4:1-9)

But Moses continued, “I beg you, Lord, I am not eloquent... and am slow in speech.” The Lord said to him, “I will teach you what to say. Aaron the Levite is your brother. I know that he is eloquent. Talk to him and ask him to speak for you. And take the rod in your hand. By it you shall do miracles.” Finally, Moses took his wife and his sons, and returned to Egypt, carrying the rod of God in his hand. (Ex 4:10-20)

Moses told Aaron everything that God said. They assembled all the children of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord said to Moses, and he performed the miracles before the people. The Israelites believed that the Lord had visited them, and that He had looked upon their burden. Bowing their heads, they adored. (Ex 4:28-31)

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<sup>99</sup> “I AM WHO AM” means “I am He Who exists, BEING itself, eternal and independent.”



## The Plagues of Egypt – (ca. 1446 B.C.) (Ex 5 - 12)

Afterward, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go.” But he answered, “Who is the Lord, that I should listen to his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” Then Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters to increase the work and burden of the Hebrew slaves. (Ex 5:1-2, 6)



**Fig 2.1.5 Moses and Aaron before the Pharaoh**

An Illustration from *Bible Primer, Old Testament*



Moses was eighty years old,<sup>100</sup> and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh. Again, the Lord sent Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh, that he might let the children of Israel go out of his land. The Lord said further, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Show me a sign,’ tell Aaron to take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh, and it shall be turned into a serpent.” Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the Lord had commanded. Aaron cast down Moses’ rod and it turned into a serpent. Pharaoh called his magicians, and by Egyptian tricks they also did the same. They all cast down their rods, and they were turned into serpents. But Aaron’s serpent devoured their serpents! Yet, Pharaoh would not let the people go. (Ex 7:7-14)

Then God sent ten terrible plagues to Egypt:

1. For seven days all the water in Egypt was turned into **blood**. The fish that were in the Nile River died, and the Egyptians had nothing to drink. But the Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 7:16-22)
2. Then the river brought forth an abundance of **frogs**, which swarmed the land and entered the houses, even the bedrooms, the ovens and the food. The Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, so the frogs died. But after the frogs had been cleared, the Pharaoh changed his mind and would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 8:1-15)
3. Then the dust in the land turned into small flying insects, called **sciniphs**,<sup>101</sup> which troubled men and beasts. But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 8:16-19)
4. Then came a plague of **flies** which swarmed the house of Pharaoh and his servants. The Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, but when the flies had left, he would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 8:21-32)

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<sup>100</sup> Since Moses was 40 years old when he went to Midian, and was 80 when he returned to Egypt, he must have lived in Midian for about 40 years before he was called by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

<sup>101</sup> These are some species of stinging or biting insects, such as lice, fleas or gnats.

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**Fig 2.1.6 The Plague of Flies**

Artist: James Joseph Jacques Tissot (1836-1902)

5. A **murrain**<sup>102</sup> killed all the cattle and animals in Egypt, except those that belonged to the Israelites. Still the Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 9:1-7)
6. **Boils** and swelling sores appeared and covered the bodies of both Egyptian men and beasts, but the Pharaoh's heart was hardened and would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 9:8-12)

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<sup>102</sup> An infectious disease.

7. There came a great **hail-storm** mingled with fire, killing cattle and vegetation in the fields, and breaking trees. The hail destroyed most of Egypt, except Goshen where the Israelites were. (Ex 9:16-35)
8. A burning wind that blew all day and all night brought a plague of **locusts** that ate up all that was left after the hail. (Ex 10:1-20)
9. This was followed by **three days of darkness**, which covered the land of Egypt, except where the children of Israel dwelt. Still Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. (Ex 10:21-29)
10. The last plague was the **death of the firstborn**. Thus says the Lord: “At midnight I will enter into Egypt. And every firstborn in the land of the Egyptians shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the handmaid at the mill, and all the firstborn of beasts.” (Ex 11)



**Fig 2.1.7 Death of the Pharaoh's Firstborn**

Artist: Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912)



Then the Lord told Moses and Aaron to instruct the people of Israel: “On the tenth day of this month let every man take a lamb by their families and houses. It shall be a male lamb without blemish, one year old. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and shall sacrifice it in the evening. You shall take its blood, and put it on the two door-posts and on the lintel of the houses in which you eat it. You shall eat the meat that night, roasted at the fire, with unleavened bread. Let none of it remain until morning. You shall eat it, with your loins girded, shoes on your feet, your staff in your hands, and shall eat it in haste. For it is the **Passover of the Lord**. I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and will kill every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. The blood shall be your sign on the houses where you are in. When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. Let this day be a memorial to you, and that you keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations forever... When you have entered into the land which the Lord will give you as He has promised, you shall observe these ceremonies.” (Ex 12:1-25)

The people of Israel did as the Lord had commanded. At midnight, the Lord slew every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the captive woman that was in the prison, and all the firstborn of cattle. Pharaoh arose in the night, and all his servants, and all Egypt. There arose a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house wherein there lay not one dead. Calling Moses and Aaron in the night, Pharaoh finally said, “Arise and depart from among my people, you and the children of Israel.” The Israelites therefore got ready to leave Egypt. The Egyptians gave them plenty of clothing, vessels of gold and silver, so that they would leave speedily. Led by Moses, six hundred thousand men on foot besides women and children, including sheep, herds, and beasts of all kinds, departed Egypt. (Ex 12:29-38)

## COMMENTARY

1. The paschal lamb that the Israelites ate during the Passover of the Lord was a figure of Christ, the Lamb of God, who was slain on the cross. As the blood of the paschal lamb that was used to mark the door posts of Israelite houses delivered them from the death of their firstborn, the Blood of the Lamb of God also delivers us from eternal death.
2. The Bible says that God sent Ten Plagues to Egypt before the Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to leave. Is there any archaeological evidence of such calamities hitting Egypt during the time of Moses? A papyrus manuscript, found in Memphis, Egypt, and now kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Leiden, Netherlands, contains a poem written by an Egyptian, named Ipuwer, which speaks of the chaotic conditions in Egypt at about the time of the Exodus. The papyrus is the only extant copy of the poem, so it would be difficult to determine the exact date of its original composition. However, the papyrus itself dates pretty close to the time of the Exodus. So, it at least deserves further study rather than outright rejection. Also, it is not just the similarities between the Ipuwer poem and the biblical narrative that need to be explained. There is also one detail that does not allow the evidence to be lightly dismissed. If the Ipuwer manuscript merely said that a disaster hit Egypt in the form of a pestilence, drought, famine, lightning, etc., then its similarity with the biblical narrative would not cause one to wonder, for those are natural calamities. But when one reads a line in the poem that says “the river [Nile] is blood” (Ipuwer, Chapter 2), and compares it with the biblical text that says the water of the river “was turned into blood” (Ex 7:20), then the similarity of the two events, – if indeed they were two different events, – is totally unexpected. Instead of indicating two different events, such language betrays rather a common experience of a unique event that happened once in one place. For the full text of the Ipuwer papyrus, see *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*. For a comparison of the Ipuwer papyrus and the biblical narrative, see *Is there extra-biblical evidence of the ten plagues in Egypt?*

## The Crossing of the Red Sea – (ca. 1445/1446 B.C.) (Ex 13 - 15)

Before they left Egypt Moses spoke to the people and said, “Remember this day when you came out of Egypt and out of the house of bondage, for with a strong hand God has brought you out of this place. *Remember to eat no leavened bread* <sup>103</sup> (Ex 13:3) ... And when you enter the land of Canaan, which He promised you and your fathers, you shall set apart all that opens the womb for the Lord, including the firstborn of your cattle. *Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to the Lord.*” <sup>104</sup> (Ex 13:11-12)

Then Moses took Joseph’s bones with him <sup>105</sup> and began the journey. The Lord showed them the way through the desert by a **pillar of cloud**, which they followed during the day, and by a **pillar of fire**, which they followed during the night. (Ex 13:19, 21)

When the king of the Egyptians was told that the people had left, his heart and those of his servants changed and they said, “Why did we let our slaves go from serving us?” He made his chariot ready, took his whole army, and pursued the Israelites. The Egyptians found them encamped at the side of the Red Sea. When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel saw the Egyptians behind them. They feared exceedingly and cried to the Lord. Moses said to the people, “Do not fear. Stand and see the great wonders of the Lord, which He will do this day. For the Egyptians, whom you see now, you shall see no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, while you shall stay calm.” (Ex 14:5-14)

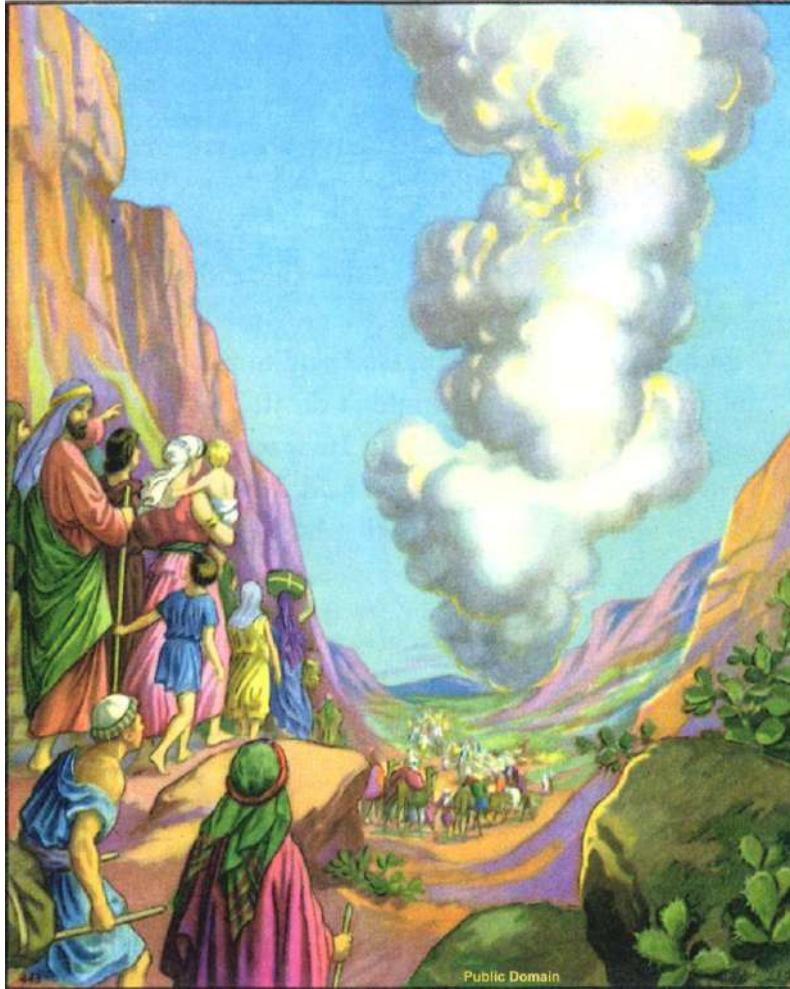
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<sup>103</sup> Thus did Moses institute the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

<sup>104</sup> This law of offering the firstborn to God is to commemorate the fact that the pharaoh let the people go because God slew every firstborn of the Egyptians. (Ex 13:14-15)

<sup>105</sup> Joseph knew that one day the Israelites would leave Egypt. So, he requested before his death that they take his bones with them when they get out of Egypt (Gen 50:23-24).





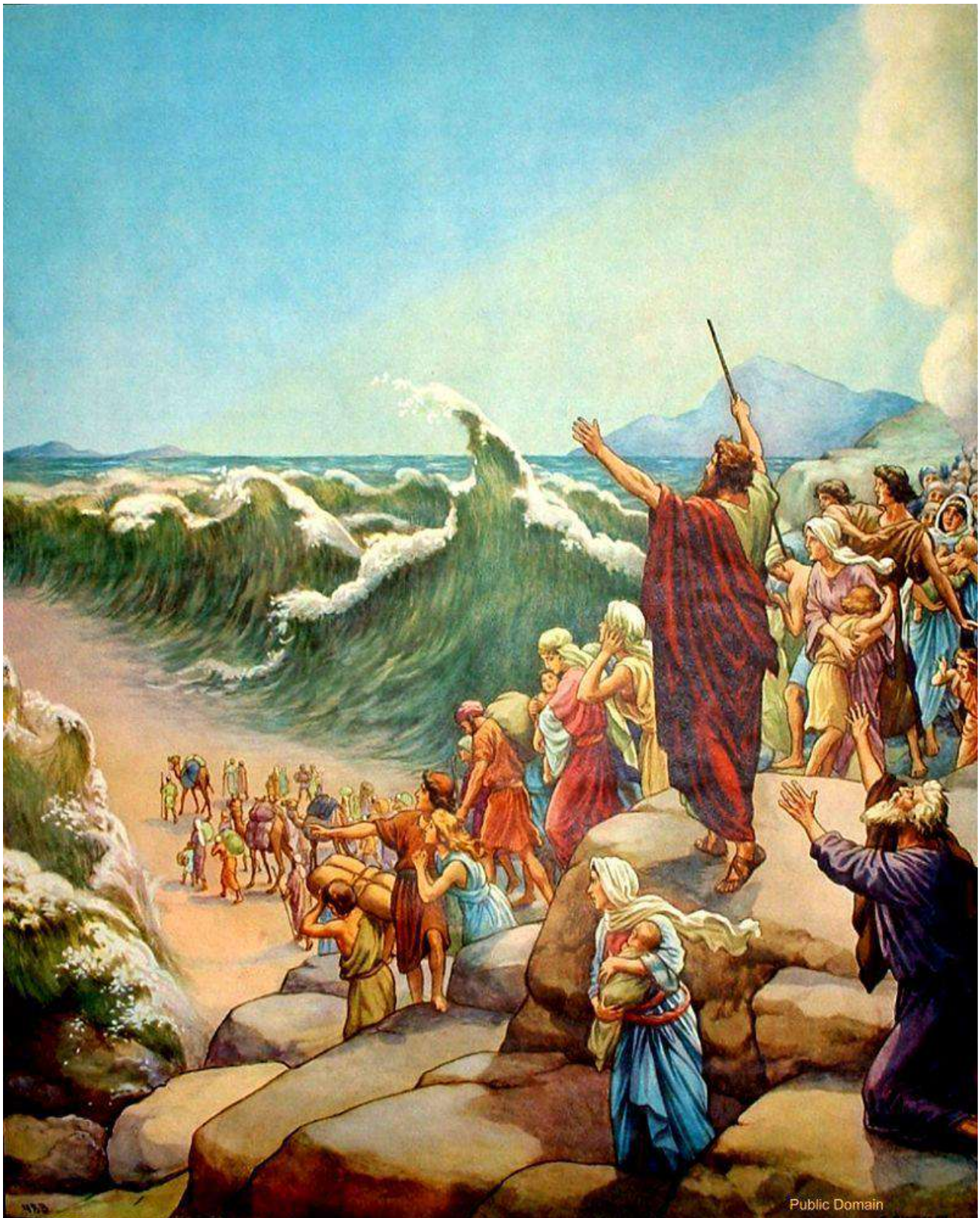
**Fig 2.1.8 The Pillar of Cloud Shows the Israelites the Way**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

The Lord said to Moses, “Lift up your rod, and stretch forth your hand over the sea, and divide it, that the children of Israel may go through the midst of the sea on dry ground.” The pillar of cloud that went ahead of the Israelites now went behind them, and separated them from the Egyptians. It was a dark cloud for the Egyptians, but gave light at night to the Israelites. (Ex 14:16-20)

When Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, the Lord caused a strong wind to blow all night, turning it into dry ground. The water was divided and the Israelites walked across the dried-up sea, the water being like a wall on their right hand and on their left. (Ex 14:21-22)





**Fig 2.1.9 The Crossing of the Red Sea**  
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



In the morning the Egyptians went after them through the midst of the sea. By God's command Moses stretched forth his hand again toward the sea. The waters returned to their former place, covering the chariots, the horsemen and the entire army of Pharaoh. (Ex 14:23, 26-28)



**Fig 2.1.10 The Drowning of Pharaoh's Army**

Artist: Frédéric Schopin (1804-1880)

The Israelites saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore, and the mighty hand that the Lord used against them (Ex 14:31). Moses and the Israelites sang this song unto the Lord:

Let us sing to the Lord  
For He is greatly glorified,  
The horse and the rider  
He has thrown into the sea.<sup>106</sup> (Ex 15:1-19)

The prophetess Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her with tambourines, and danced. (Ex 15:20)

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<sup>106</sup> This is just the beginning of the *First Song of Moses*. Read the full song in Ex 15:1-19. The *Second Song of Moses*, composed close to the time of his death, is in Deut 32:1-43.



## COMMENTARY

1. The *pillar of cloud* and the *pillar of fire* that showed the Israelites the way through the wilderness were figures of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shows us the way to our salvation. Indeed, Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).
2. St. Paul hinted that the crossing of the Red Sea was also a figure of Baptism (See 1 Cor 10:1-2). As the Israelites went in the midst of the waters of the Red Sea to pass from slavery to freedom, so we are put in the midst of the waters of Baptism to pass from the bondage of sin to the freedom of the sons of God.
3. The deliverance of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt is also a type of our delivery from the bondage of sin. Their journey and the battles they had to fight to reach and conquer the promised land is a figure of our souls' journey and struggle to attain Heaven. And the land of Canaan (the promised land) is itself also a type or figure of our Heavenly Home.
4. Many critics complained that they could not find any evidence of the Exodus in Egypt. Indeed, finding physical evidences for the Exodus is a big challenge for bible scholars and archaeologists. But this is true of any ancient event. For example, if the Battle of Kadesh had not been documented in stone tablets or in the temple walls of Karnak, we would not know that a major war between Egypt (under Ramesses II) and the Hittite Empire happened in the 13th century B.C. There were 50,000 soldiers with about 5000 chariots and horses who fought in the Battle of Kadesh (near the Orontes River), but they left no direct tangible evidence that disclose the fact to us today – no broken bones, armors or weapons. Often, the evidences, if there are any, are buried tens of feet below the ground. This shows that large groups of people could be very active in one area of the Ancient Near East and leave us no trace of their presence there. Notwithstanding the lack of direct physical evidences, the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus believed in the historicity of the Exodus. See *The History*, Vol. II, Book 5, paragraph 5.3–5.5. In addition, our Lord confirmed that the Exodus was factual. He even used the events that happened in the wilderness to expound and clarify His teachings on the Eucharist (See John 6:49-51).

## Problems in the Desert

(Ex 16-17)

They moved forward from Elim to the desert of Sin, which lies between Elim and Sinai. There was no bread in the desert, so the Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron. “Why have you brought us into this desert,” they asked, “that you might destroy us with hunger?” (Ex 16:1-3)

The Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel. Say to them, ‘In the evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning, you shall have your fill of bread.’” In the evening **quails** came and covered the camp. And in the morning, there fell from heaven fine hoar-frost that covered the ground. Moses said to them, “This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.” They called it **manna**. It was white, and it tasted like flour and honey. Moses instructed them to gather as much as it was enough to eat. (Ex 16:11-16)

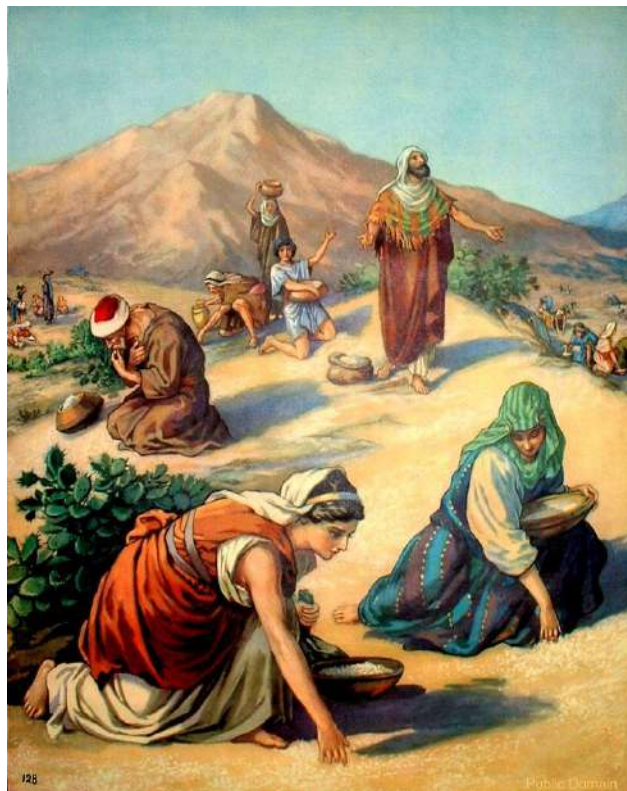


Fig 2.1.11 The Israelites Gather Manna

The children of Israel ate quail and manna during the forty years that they stayed in the desert until they reached the land of Canaan. However, they had other problems. When they encamped in Rephidim there was no water in the place and the people were thirsty. Again, they murmured against Moses, but the Lord said to Moses, “Go before the people, and take your rod with you to Mount Horeb. I will stand there before you. Strike the rock with your rod, and water will come out of it.” Moses did so and the people quenched their thirst. (Ex 16:35-17:6)



**Fig 2.1.12 Moses Strikes the Rock at Mount Horeb**

Artist: Valerio Castello (1624-1659)



Another problem arose when an unfriendly tribe led by Amalek came to make war with the Israelites in Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, “Choose out men to fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill having the rod of God in my hand.” Joshua did as Moses instructed, and he fought Amalek. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went upon the top of the hill. When Moses lifted up his hands (in prayer), Israel prevailed, but if he let them down a little, Amalek prevailed. Moses’ hands were heavy, so Aaron and Hur took a stone and put it under him to sit on. Then they held his hands up on both sides until sunset. Joshua won the battle and put Amalek and his people to flight. (Ex 17:8-13)



**Fig 2.1.13 Victory over Amalek**

Artist: Joseph von Führich (1800-1876)

## COMMENTARY

1. The *manna* is a figure of the Sacrament of the Eucharist in which Christ offers Himself as spiritual food under the appearance of bread.
2. As St. Paul says, the rock is a figure of Christ, the spiritual rock out of which streams of living water (divine grace) come forth. See 1 Cor 10:4.
3. Amalek was the grandson of Esau, and his descendants (the Amalekites) were unfriendly to the Jews. The victory of the Israelites against the Amalekites is a figure of the victory of the Church against her enemies, a victory that is won both by struggle *and* prayer.

## The Ten Commandments

(Ex 19 – 31)

In the third month after their departure from Egypt, the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sinai, where they camped and pitched their tents. Moses went up to God in the mountain and the Lord said to him: “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel: You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, how I have carried you upon eagles’ wings and have taken you to Myself. *If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people. You shall be to Me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.*” (Ex 19:1-6)

Moses came down and told the people what the Lord had said. The people answered together, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.” When Moses had related the people’s words to the Lord, the Lord said to him, “Lo, now will I come to you in the denseness of a cloud, that the people may hear Me speaking to you, and may believe you forever. Go to the people, and sanctify them today, and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments. Let them be ready, for on the third day I will come down in the sight of all the people, upon Mount Sinai. Say to them: Do not go up into the mount. Every one that touches the mount shall die.” (Ex 19:7-12)

Moses came down from the mountain and told the people what God had said. The third day came, and the morning appeared. Behold thunders began to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud covered the mount. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai in fire, and the smoke arose from it as out of a furnace. The noise of the trumpet sounded exceedingly loud, and by degrees grew louder and louder. Those who were in the camp feared. They stood at the bottom of the mount. God allowed only Moses and Aaron to go up the mountain. (Ex 19:14-25)





**Fig 2.1.14 Moses Receives the Ten Commandments**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

God spoke the Ten Commandments to Moses, saying:

“I am the Lord your God: (Ex 20:2)

1. You shall not have strange gods before Me. (v.3-6)
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. (v.7)
3. Remember that you keep holy the sabbath day. (v.8-11)
4. Honor your father and your mother. (v.12)
5. You shall not kill. (v.13)
6. You shall not commit adultery. (v.14)
7. You shall not steal. (v.15)
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (v.16)
9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. (v.17)
10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.” (v.17)

The people heard the voices and the sound of the trumpet, and saw the mountain smoking. Terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off. When Moses came down, they said to Moses, “Speak to us, and we will hear. Let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die (of fright).” (Ex 20:18-19)

Therefore, Moses started writing and explaining to the people the laws He received from God, including the Ten Commandments (Ex 20), laws concerning slaves (Ex 21), laws concerning the punishment of theft, usury, and the making of offerings to God (Ex 22), and ordinances for judges and the celebration of feasts (Ex 23).

In the morning Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and offered holocausts to the Lord. He took half of the blood of the victims and sprinkled it upon the people saying, “*This is the blood of the covenant,*<sup>107</sup> *which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.*” (Ex 24:4-8)

By God’s command Moses again ascended the mountain and a cloud covered the mount. He was there forty days and forty nights conversing with God. (Ex 24:12-18)

In the mountain God told Moses the prescriptions for making the ark of the covenant and the candlestick (Ex 25), the prescriptions for making the tabernacle and its appurtenances (Ex 26), the altar and the court of the tabernacle (Ex 27), the priestly garments, (Ex 28), the manner of consecrating the priests (Ex 29), etc. When the Lord finished giving instructions to Moses, He gave him two tables of stone which contained the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God (Ex 31:18; Deut 5:22).

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<sup>107</sup> Thus, the covenant of the Old Law was established on Mount Sinai, and sealed by the blood of oxen. As will be shown later the covenant of the New Law would be established on Mount Calvary, and sealed by the Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

## COMMENTARY

1. The covenant in the Old Law was the **mutual promise** between God and Israel. *On the side of God*, the covenant was His promise to protect and keep Israel as His people. But *on the side of Israel*, the covenant was Israel's promise to observe the Ten Commandments. The observance of the Ten Commandments was their promise or covenant with God. For this reason, the Israelites understood the word "covenant" as synonymous to the Ten Commandments (See Ex 34:27-28).
2. When St. Paul said that Christ made the old covenant obsolete (Heb 8:13), he did not mean to say that Christ made the Ten Commandments obsolete. What he meant was that *on the side of God* Christ's new covenant offers better promises than the old (Heb 8:6). For example, in the old covenant God did not promise forgiveness of sin (Heb 10:4), but in the new covenant sins are forgiven and not remembered anymore (Heb 8:12). In the old covenant the subjects remain under a curse (Gal 3:10), but in the new covenant Christ redeems them from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13). Thus, *on the side of God* the new covenant is better than the old and renders the old covenant obsolete. But *on the side of the people* the new covenant still requires them to keep or observe the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are not obsolete in the new covenant. Their faithful observance remains as the people's sacred promise or covenant with God.



## The Golden Calf

(Ex 32-34)

Because Moses was delayed in coming down from the mountain,<sup>108</sup> the people went to Aaron and said, “Arise, make for us gods<sup>109</sup> that will lead us. For this Moses, the man who brought us out of Egypt, – we know not what has befallen him.” Aaron said to them, “Take the golden earrings from the ears of your wives, your sons and daughters, and bring them to me.” When he had received them, he fashioned them by foundry’s work into a molten calf.<sup>110</sup> Aaron built an altar before it, where they offered holocausts, sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (Ex 32:1-6)



**Fig 2.1.15 Adoration of the Golden Calf**

Artist: Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665)

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<sup>108</sup> Moses was up in the mountain a long time – 40 days and 40 nights, according to Ex 24:18, which is why the people had grown weary waiting for his return.

<sup>109</sup> That means, idols. Here we see the Egyptian influence on the children of Israel. They were in Egypt for a long time (430 years, according to Ex 12:40), and the Egyptians worshipped many idols (polytheism). Now they wanted an idol to replace the true God.

<sup>110</sup> This is due to Egyptian influence, which indulged in the worship of gods in the form of animals.



The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Go down. Your people have sinned. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have adored it, sacrificing victims to it. Let me destroy them.” But Moses begged the Lord, saying: “Why, O Lord, is Your anger enkindled against Your people? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, saying: ‘I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and this whole land I will give to your descendants, and you shall possess it forever.’” The Lord was appeased and Moses descended from the mountain, carrying the two tables of stone in his hand. When he came close to the camp, he saw the calf, and the people dancing. Being very angry, he threw the tables out of his hand, and broke them at the foot of the mount. (Ex 32:7-19)



**Fig 2.1.16 Moses Breaks the Stone Tables of the Covenant (the Ten Commandments)**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Laying hold of the calf which they had made, Moses burnt it, ground it to powder, and diluted it in water. Then he made the Israelites drink it. Standing in the gate of the camp, he said, “If any man be on the Lord’s side, let him join me.” All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together around him. Then he commanded every man to take his sword, go from gate to gate through the camp, and slay everyone who remained in the camp.<sup>111</sup> The sons of Levi did according to the words of Moses, and there were slain that day about twenty-three thousand men.<sup>112</sup> (Ex 32:20-28)

Moses said to the people, “You have sinned with a very grave sin. I will go up to the Lord, if by any means I may be able to entreat him for your crime.” Moses went up the mountain again and prayed, “I beg You, this people had sinned a heinous sin, and they made for themselves gods of gold. Either forgive them their sin, or if You do not, then strike me out of the book that You have written.” But God answered him, “He that had sinned against Me, him will I strike out of my book. But you, go and lead this people where I have told you, and my angel shall go before you.” (Ex 32:30-34)

Hearing how displeased the Lord was for their sin, the people mourned and stripped themselves of their ornaments. Moses pitched the tabernacle outside the camp and there he interceded for the people again. This time God heard his prayer and, after a long conversation with him, He told him: “Cut two tables of stone like the former, and I will write upon them the words which were in the tables that you broke.” Moses therefore cut two tables of stone and took these up the mountain. God<sup>113</sup> wrote the Ten Commandments again upon them. (Ex 33:30-34:27)

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<sup>111</sup> Basically, those who persisted in practicing idolatry.

<sup>112</sup> Some modern translations say “three thousand men” instead of twenty-three thousand. But the three thousand probably consisted only of those killed by the sons of Levi. There were also others whom God Himself killed (Ex 32:35), which could bring the total who perished that day to twenty-three thousand. Speaking of this occasion, St. Paul also said that twenty-three thousand fell in one day (1 Cor 10:7-8).

<sup>113</sup> God, not Moses, wrote them again on the stones, as confirmed by Deut 10:4

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**Fig 2.1.17 God Writes the Ten Commandments Again**

Artist: Joseph Ritter von Führich (Austrian, 1800-1876)

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he held the two tables of stone. But he did not know that his face was horned<sup>114</sup> from conversing with the Lord. Seeing the face of Moses horned, Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come near him. So, Moses put a veil upon his face whenever he spoke to them. (Ex 34:29-35)

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<sup>114</sup> “Horned” – That means, Moses’ face shone brightly and his head sent forth two rays of light like horns. The shining face and the light rays on his head were visible effects of his fervent prayer.

## The Tabernacle

(Ex 25-30; 35-40)

In the mountain God also gave Moses other ordinances besides the Ten Commandments for the people to follow. In particular, He gave them specific instructions on how He wanted to be worshipped. (Ex 25:1-9)

Through Moses God told the Israelites to build a *tabernacle*, which was basically a tent where people could perform acts of worship. He told them to make a *portable* tabernacle, one that could easily be taken apart and moved from place to place, depending on where the Israelites settled in their journey. Outside and around the Tabernacle was a fenced courtyard for the people. (Ex 26:1-30)



**Fig 2.1.18 Model of the Tabernacle in Timna Valley Park, Israel**



The Tabernacle itself would have two rooms: a smaller room called the *Holy of Holies*, and a larger room called the *Sanctuary* (or the Holy Place). The two rooms were to be separated by a curtain or veil (Ex 26:31-35). Within the Holy of Holies was placed the Ark of the Covenant, a small box that contained the two stone tables on which God had written the Ten Commandments. Within the Sanctuary were kept three sacred objects dedicated to God's worship: the Table of Showbread (Ex 25:23-30), the Golden Candlestick (Ex 25:31-40), and the Altar of Incense (Ex 30:1-10).

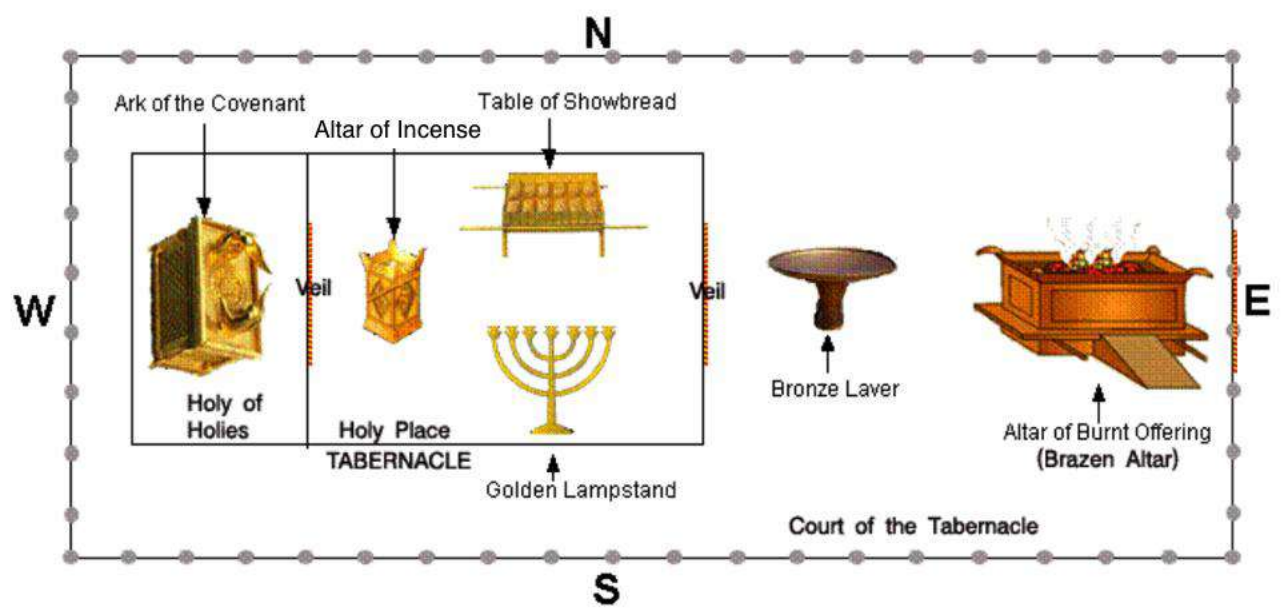
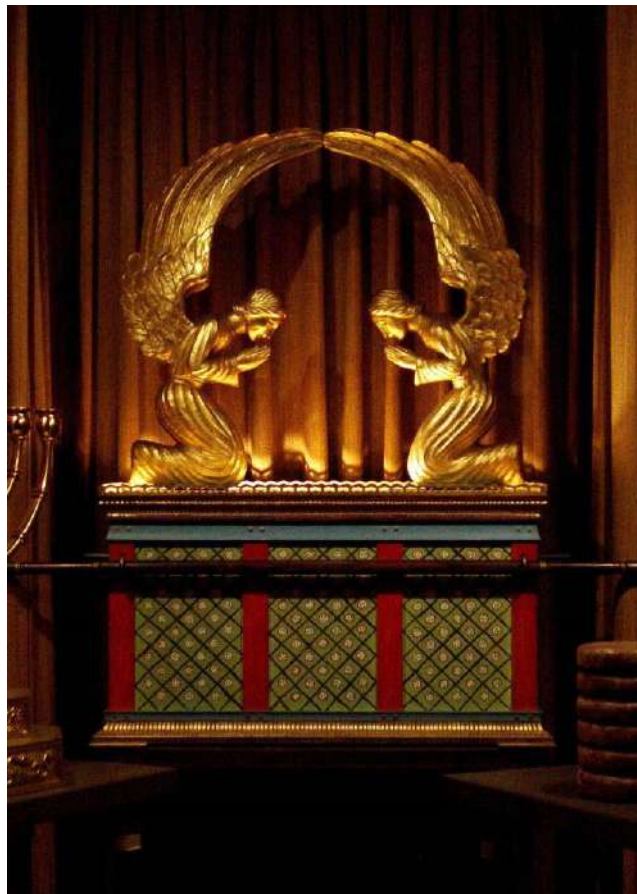


Fig 2.1.19 Layout of the Tabernacle and Courtyard

In the courtyard were two other sacred objects: the Altar of Burnt-offering (Ex 27:1-8) and the Brazen Laver (Ex 30:17-21), a water basin in which priests had to wash themselves before they could do any sacred service. The sacrifices of the Old Law were either *bloody* (in which the victims were cows, sheep, goats or doves without blemish) or *unbloody* (in which the offerings were fruit, flour, cakes, wine and unleavened bread). When the victim in a bloody offering was wholly burnt, it was called a *holocaust* or *burnt offering*. When only the fat was burned and the rest eaten, it was called either a *peace offering* (in thanksgiving for benefits received) or a *sin offering* (for the expiation of sins committed). (Lev 1- 8)

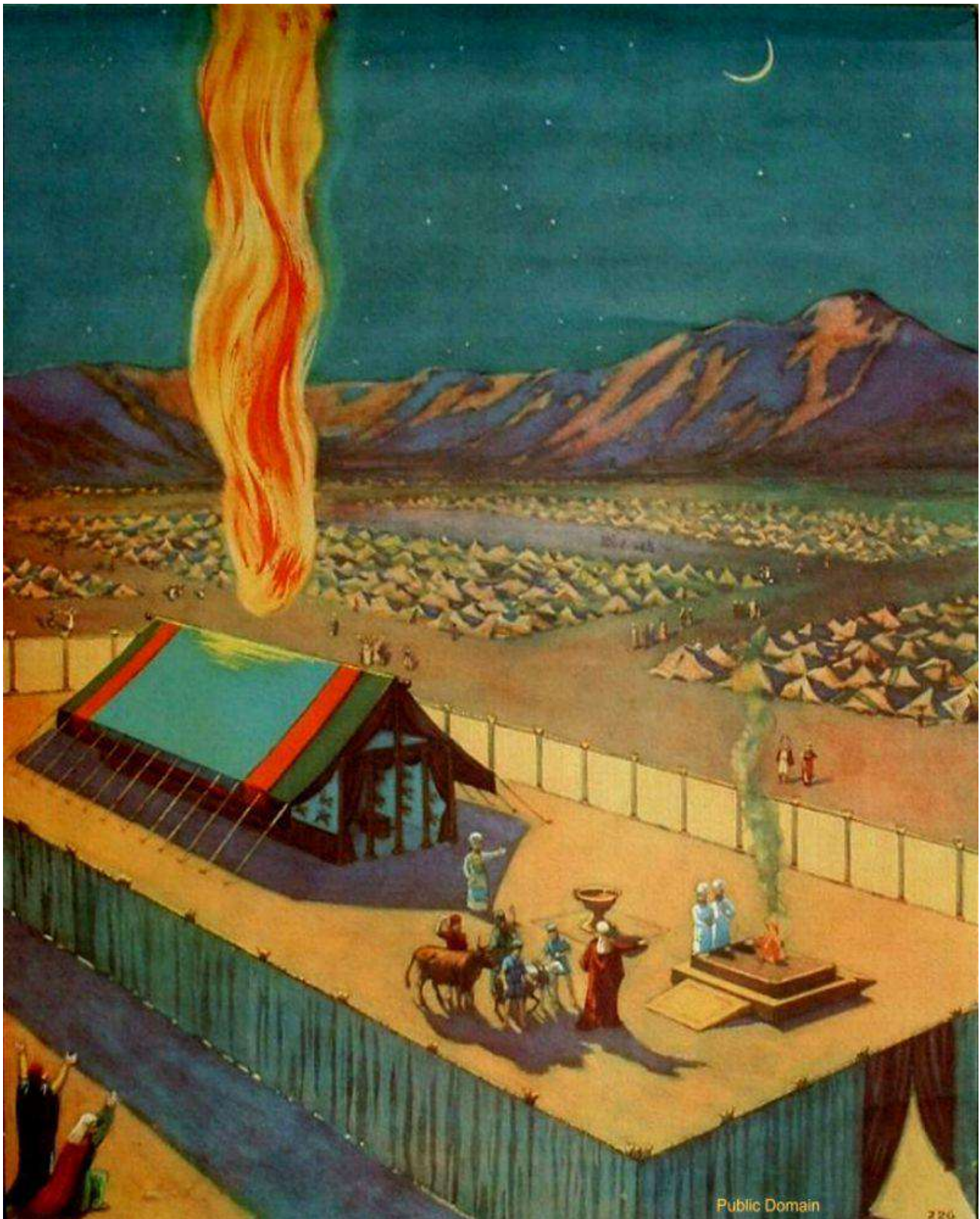


The most sacred object in the tabernacle is the Ark of the Covenant, which is kept at the Holy of Holies. The Ark contains the stone tables of the Law. God gave Moses directions for making the Ark. It was made of precious wood overlaid with gold. Its top cover, called the *propitiatory* or the *mercy seat*, had two cherubim, one on each side, looking toward each other and with their wings spread out to cover the whole length of the mercy seat. The four corners of the box had gold rings through which bars could be inserted when the ark needed to be carried or moved. (Ex 25:10-22)



**Fig 2.1.20 The Ark of the Covenant**

When the tabernacle was finished and all its appurtenances were set in their proper places, a strange cloud hovered over the Ark of the Covenant indicating God's presence in their midst. No one could enter the tent as long as the cloud was present. The cloud hung over the tabernacle by day, and a fire by night, in the sight of all the children of Israel (Ex 40:32-36).



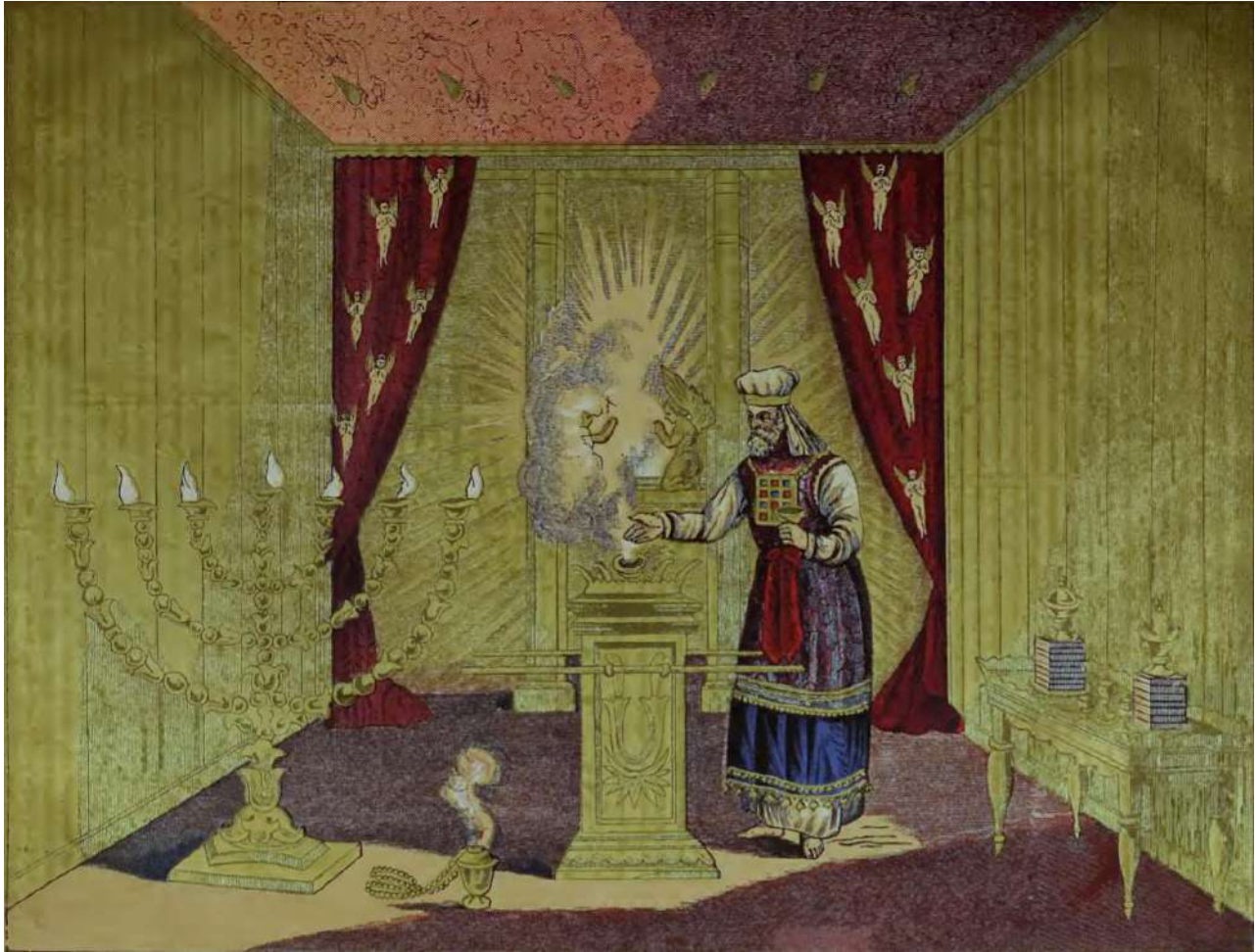
**Fig 2.1.21 The Tabernacle at Night**  
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



By God's command Moses instituted the following feasts:

1. *The Feast of the Passover (**Pesach**)*, in which the Israelites celebrate the day when the tenth plague “passed over” their houses and saved their firstborn sons from death (Ex 12:1-13; Num 9:1-14);
2. *The Feast of Unleavened Bread (**Chag haMatzot**)*, which follows the Passover, celebrates the day when the Israelites were brought out of Egypt. For this memorial God commanded them not to eat any leavened bread or anything leavened for seven days (Ex 12:14-20; Lev 23:6-8);
3. *The Feast of First Fruits (**Yom HaBikkurim**)*, a day of worship to be celebrated every year from the time the Israelites entered the Promised Land. They were commanded to bring in and offer the first fruits of their harvests in thanksgiving to the Lord (Lev 23:9-14);
4. *The Feast of Pentecost (**Shavuot** or **Chag HaBikkurim**)*, fifty days after the Passover feast, was a day of thanksgiving in which they also offered first-fruits in remembrance of the Law received on Mount Sinai (Lev 23:15-16);
5. *The Feast of Trumpets (**Rosh Hashana**)* was a day of rest, marked by a blast of trumpets. No servile work was permitted for this day, and a holocaust must be offered (Lev 23:23-25);
6. *The Feast of the Atonement (**Yom Kippur**)*, the day when the High priest would offer a young cow as sacrifice to expiate for his sins and a goat for the sins of the people. After the sacrifice he would enter the Holy of Holies to incense the Ark and sprinkle it with the blood of the sacrifice. Only the High priest was allowed to enter the Ark, and only once a year during the Feast of the Atonement (Lev 16:8-34; 23:26-32);
7. *The Feast of Tabernacles (**Succoth**)*, during which they made tents and lived in them, to commemorate how they lived in the wilderness for 40 years (Lev 23:33-44).





**Fig 2.1.22 High Priest Inside the Tabernacle Celebrates the Feast of the Atonement**

Moses consecrated his brother as High Priest and gave him vestments to use for his office. In particular the High Priest wears a breastplate (See picture above). The sons of Aaron were also consecrated as priests to offer sacrifices (Lev 8), while the sons of Levi (the Levites) were assigned to perform subordinate services in the Sanctuary (Num 3).

## COMMENTARY

1. The Ark of the Covenant is a figure of the tabernacle in Catholic churches. But while the Ark merely houses the stone tables of the Law, the tabernacle in the church houses Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. However, the Ark was not just a piece of furniture for dead stone tablets. A cloud hovered on top of it, which filled the whole tabernacle with God's glory, indicating that God also dwelt in it, as Christ dwells in our tabernacles.
2. The Ark of the Covenant is also a figure or type of the Virgin Mary, as we say in the Litany of Loreto: "Ark of the Covenant, pray for us." Just as the Ark provided home for the stone tables of the Law and was a dwelling place of the Lord, so Mary in her womb provided a dwelling for our infant Lord.
3. The bloody sacrifices of the Old Law were a figure of the bloody sacrifice of Christ on the cross, while the unbloody sacrifices of the Old Law were a type of the Sacrifice of the Mass in which the same sacrifice that Christ made on Calvary is made present to us in an unbloody manner.

## The Twelve Scouts

(Num 13 - 14)

After spending a year near Mount Sinai,<sup>115</sup> the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Send men to view the land of Canaan, which I will give to the children of Israel.” Moses sent twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Among those chosen were Joshua and Caleb. He told them: “Go up by the south side. View and see what sort of land it is, and whether the people be strong or weak, few in number or many. Check the land itself, and see whether it be good or bad; flat or barren, woody or without trees. Have courage, and bring us some of the fruits of the land.” (Num 13:1-21)



**Fig 2.1.23 Return of the Scouts**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

<sup>115</sup> The Israelites arrived in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in the third month after their departure from Egypt (Ex 19:1), and began moving again on the second year and the second month after their departure from Egypt (Num 10:11-13). Thus, they were encamped near Mount Sinai for almost a year.



After forty days the scouts came back carrying pomegranates and figs. Two of them carried on their shoulders a pole loaded with a cluster of grapes. The scouts reported that the land indeed was flowing with milk and honey, which could be seen from the fruits that they brought back. “However,” they said, “the land has strong inhabitants, and the cities are great and walled. The people are of a tall stature. Among them we saw giants.” (Num 13:24-34)

Knowing that the Promised Land would be difficult to occupy, the Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying: “Would God that we had died in Egypt, and would God we may die in this vast wilderness. Is it not better to return into Egypt? Let us appoint a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” But Joshua and Caleb said to the multitude, “The land which we inspected is very good. If the Lord favors us, he will bring us into it, and give it to us. Be not rebellious against the Lord, and fear not the people of this land. The Lord is with us.” (Num 14:1-9)

The glory of the Lord appeared over the tabernacle of the covenant to all the children of Israel. The Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people detract me? I will strike them therefore with pestilence, and consume them.” Moses said to the Lord, “Forgive, Lord, the sins of this people, according to the greatness of your mercy.” The Lord forgave the people for murmuring. But as punishment for their sin, He said: “All you that were twenty years old or older, and have murmured against me, shall not enter into the land of Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua. Your children shall wander in the desert forty years.”<sup>116</sup> The other ten scouts, who at their return excited the multitude to murmur against God, were struck dead. And those who rejected God’s punishment of remaining in the desert, and who still tried to enter Canaan, were killed by the Amalekites and the Canaanites. (Num 14:10-45)

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<sup>116</sup> That means, the Israelites were condemned to wander in the desert for up to forty years after their departure from Egypt. Since they had already been in the desert near Sinai for one year, they would remain in the desert for another 39 years.

## COMMENTARY

1. Although God forgave the Israelites their sins, He nevertheless imposed upon them a temporal punishment, that is, they were to wander in the wilderness and not enter into the Promised Land until 40 years after their departure from Egypt. Only those who were then younger than 20 years old would actually be able to enter Canaan; those 20 years old and older would die before reaching the Promised Land. The experience of the Israelites shows that there usually are temporal punishments that remain after a sin has been forgiven. This is why the Church teaches that some of those who die right after making a good confession do not necessarily go straight to Heaven, but have to spend some time in Purgatory.
2. The scouts who went to Canaan reported that they saw giants in the place. Is this credible? Indeed, it is. From ancient times to more recent times giant people have been reported all over the world – in Australia, China, Ireland, Greece, Africa, India, Great Britain, and in North and South America. See, for example, *Top 10 Giant Discoveries in North America*.
3. How big were the giants mentioned in the Bible? The scouts who went to Canaan said that the giants were so big that they (the scouts) seemed like locusts compared to them (Num 13:34). This probably was an exaggeration aimed at discouraging the Israelites from going back to Canaan. Giants reported around the world only range in height from 7 ft to 18 ft. Goliath, another well-known giant mentioned in the Bible, was described as having a height of “six cubits and a span” (1 Sam 17:4). Now, each cubit is about 18 inches, and a span is half a cubit, so Goliath must have been only 9’ 9” tall – still a giant compared to most of the Philistine soldiers, but not big enough to make the Israelites look like locusts compared to him.

## The Brazen Serpent

(Num 20 - 21)

Near the end of the forty years the children of Israel came into the desert of Zin, and the people abode in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried in the same place. Again, there was no water, so the people came to Moses and Aaron and said, “Why have you brought us into the wilderness, that both we and our cattle should die? Why have you brought us into this wretched place which cannot be sowed, nor bring forth figs, nor vines, nor pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink?” Leaving the multitude, Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the covenant, fell flat upon the ground, and cried to the Lord. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Take the rod, and assemble the people together, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before them, and it shall yield waters. And when you have brought forth water out of the rock, all the multitude and their cattle shall drink.” (Num 20:1-8)

Moses took the rod, and having gathered the multitude before the rock, he said to them, “Hear, you rebellious and incredulous people. Can we bring forth water out of this rock?” Moses lifted up his hand, and struck the rock twice with the rod. And there came forth water in great abundance, so that the people and their cattle drank. But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you have not believed me,<sup>117</sup> *you shall not be the ones to bring these people into the land which I will give them.*”<sup>118</sup> Moses therefore took Aaron and his son Eleazar up into Mount Hor. Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments, and vested Eleazar with them, thus making him the next High Priest. There on the top of the mountain Aaron died. Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain and joined the multitude. (Num 20:9-30)

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<sup>117</sup> That is, because Moses struck the rock instead of simply speaking to the rock as he was told.

<sup>118</sup> The honor of bringing the Israelites to Canaan was transferred to Joshua (Num 27:18-23).



They journeyed from Mount Hor by the way that led to the Red Sea. The people began to be weary of their journey and speaking against God and Moses, they said: “Why did you bring us out of Egypt? There is no bread, nor have we any water. Our soul now loathes this very light food.” Wherefore the Lord sent among the people fiery serpents, which bit them and killed many of them. Upon which they came to Moses and said: “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you. Pray that He may take away these serpents from us.” And Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to him, “Make a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign. Whoever, being struck, shall look on it, shall live.” Moses therefore made a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign. When they that were bitten looked on it, they were healed. (Num 21:4-9)



**Fig 2.1.24 The Brazen Serpent**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

On their way to Moab the Israelites had to fight the unfriendly Amorites. For Sihon, the king of the Amorites, would not let the Israelites pass through the Amorite territory even when the Israelites promised not to touch their vineyards and disturb their wells. Sihon marched with his army against Israel but was defeated. (Num 21:21-25)

In another location, Og, the king of Bashan, tried to make war with the Israelites and was also defeated. (Num 21:33-35)

## COMMENTARY

1. After Moses struck the rock twice to get water for the people, God punished him and Aaron. The punishment was that they would not enter the Promised Land with the rest of the people (Num 20:12). For God only asked him to speak to the rock, yet he struck it twice. Moses probably thought that the murmurings and sins of the people were too much for God to forgive, and that he needed to strike the rock rather than simply speak to it to bring the water out. This moment of doubt about God's mercy might seem like a small sin, but notice how God punished him and Aaron severely. On account of this sin, they were not permitted to enter the Promised Land. Therefore, do not assume that venial sins are punished lightly. They are not punished with the everlasting flames of hell, but they could mean several years of suffering in Purgatory. Also, if God punishes venial sins so severely, ought we not fear more the punishment He imposes on mortal sins?
2. The brazen serpent, which was set up on a pole, was a type of Our Savior Jesus Christ, who was lifted up on the cross (John 3:14). As the Israelites were healed by looking upon the serpent, so all who look up to Christ with faith are healed of the wounds of sin caused by the infernal serpent.
3. Og was a ruler of a nation of **giants**, and was himself a giant. The Bible describes his bed as 9 cubits (13.5 ft) long and 4 cubits (6 ft) wide (Deut 3:11-13). Bashan, the kingdom of Og, still exists, and was explored and described in 1865 by Josias Leslie Porter in *The Giant Cities of Bashan and Syria's Holy Places*.

## Balaam's Prophecy

(Num 22 - 24)

The Israelites encamped in the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho. Balak, the king of the Moabites,<sup>119</sup> seeing what the Israelites had done to the Amorites, was in great fear of them. He therefore sent the elders and nobles of his kingdom to a soothsayer,<sup>120</sup> named Balaam, that he might come and curse the Israelites. The ancients of Moab and the elders of Midian came with rich presents for Balaam. After giving him Balak's message, Balaam responded, "Stay here tonight and I will answer whatever the Lord shall say to me." But God came and said to him, "You shall not go with them, nor shall you curse the people, because they are blessed." (Num 22:1-12)

The noble princes of Moab returned to Balak and said, "Balaam would not come with us." Then Balak sent many more nobles than he had sent before, and promised to give greater rewards for Balaam. But God came to Balaam in the night and said to him, "Arise and go with them, but only do what I shall command you." (Num 22:14-20)

Balaam arose in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with them. But God was angry because he went.<sup>121</sup> So, the angel of the Lord<sup>122</sup> stood in the way of Balaam, who sat on the donkey and had two servants with him. Balaam could not see the angel, but the donkey saw him. Seeing the angel with a drawn sword in his hand standing in the way, the donkey turned herself out of the road and went into the field. When Balaam beat her to bring

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<sup>119</sup> The Moabites, it may be recalled, were the descendants of Lot through his elder daughter.

<sup>120</sup> A soothsayer is a person who supposedly could foresee the future by using magic and divination.

<sup>121</sup> God became angry probably because He saw that Balaam, although permitted to go with the messengers of Balak, was disposed to curse the Israelites for the sake of the great rewards promised by Balak.

<sup>122</sup> Here again "the angel of the Lord" was God Himself in the form of an angel.



her back to the road, the angel stood in a narrow space between two walls that enclose the vineyards. Seeing him, the donkey thrust herself close to the wall, and bruised Balaam's foot. So, Balaam beat her again. The angel went next to a narrow place where there was no way to turn aside either to the right or to the left, and stood to meet him. When the donkey saw the angel standing, she fell under Balaam's foot who, because he became very angry, beat her sides more vehemently with a staff. (Num 22:21-27)



**Fig 2.1.25 Balaam and his Ass**

Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669)

The Lord opened the donkey's mouth,<sup>123</sup> and the donkey said: "What have I done to you? Why do you strike me this third time?" Balaam answered, "Because you deserved it. You served me badly." The donkey said, "Am I not your beast, on which you have been accustomed to ride until this present day? Did I ever treat you the same way?" Balaam said: "Never." The Lord then opened Balaam's eyes, so that he saw the angel with a drawn sword. Balaam bowed his head and fell flat on the ground. (Num 22:28-31)

The angel said to him, "Why did you beat your donkey three times? I have come to withstand you because your way is perverse."<sup>124</sup> Unless the donkey had turned out of the way, giving place to me who stood against you, I would have slain you, and she would have lived." Balaam said, "I have sinned, not knowing that you stood against me. Now if it displeases you that I go, I will return." The angel said, "Go with these men, and see you speak no other thing than what I shall command you." He went therefore with the noble princes. (Num 22:32-35)

When morning came, Balak took Balaam to three different mountains, where he could see the Israelites in the valley. Balak hoped that Balaam would curse them. But each time God prevented Balaam from cursing the Israelites, and Balaam blessed them instead, saying, "How beautiful are your tabernacles, O Jacob, and your tents, O Israel!" Being angry, Balak asked him just to return home. But God opened Balaam's eyes and from his visions he made this startling prophecy: "*I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not near. A STAR SHALL RISE out of Jacob and a scepter shall spring up from Israel, and shall strike the chiefs of Moab, and shall waste all the children of Seth.*" Then he returned to his own country. Balak also returned the way that he came. (Num 22:41-24:25)

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<sup>123</sup> This means that God controlled the mouth of the donkey, so that it began to speak.

<sup>124</sup> "Your way is perverse," that is to say, your inclinations are wicked.

## COMMENTARY

1. Balaam's prophecy refers to our Savior. He predicted, first of all, that the Savior will come, but after a long time. ("I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not near"). In fact, our Redeemer was not born until approximately 1400 years after Balaam made this prophecy. Secondly, Balaam prophesied that our Lord would come from one of the children of Jacob ("A STAR SHALL RISE out of Jacob"), and that He would, like a star, illumine the world around him. Indeed, our Lord was a descendant of Jacob, and is hailed today as the Light of the world as He Himself claimed to be: "I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Thirdly, Balaam predicted that the Savior would be a king ("A scepter shall spring up from Israel"). Indeed, the Redeemer was King of the Jews, and King in the Kingdom of God. Finally, Balaam predicted that the Messiah would overcome His enemies ("...and shall strike the chiefs of Moab"). Indeed, He is the Head of the Church, which will always triumph till the end of time, because "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).
2. Balaam's home is located east of the Promised Land. In the east the prophecy of Balaam was well known and preserved by tradition. There the people waited for the coming of a great star, a king who would rise out of Israel. This is why the wise men "from the east" (Matt 2:1) went right away to Judea as soon as his birth was announced by a star.



## The Last Days of Moses – (ca. 1406 B.C.)

(Num 27:12-23; Deut 1 - 34)

While the children of Israel were still encamped in the plains of Moab, and as the end of their forty years of wandering in the desert was drawing near, God said to Moses: “Go up into this mountain,<sup>125</sup> and view from there the land which I will give to the children of Israel.” Because of his sin, Moses would not pass the Jordan with them to enter the land of Canaan. The Lord told him to lay his hands on Joshua and appoint him as the new leader of the Israelites. Joshua will lead the people to the Promised Land. Moses did as he was commanded. (Num 27:12-23)



**Fig 2.1.26 Moses Views the Promised Land from Mount Nebo**  
From *Cottage Pictures from the Old Testament*, 1857

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<sup>125</sup> The *Book of Numbers* said “mountain Abarim,” but the *Book of Deuteronomy* clarifies Abarim as the mountain passages of Mount Nebo (Deut 32:49). So, Moses actually had a view of the land of Canaan from the top of Mount Nebo.

Moses knew that he would die soon. He gave his parting words to the people. “Now, O Israel,” he said, “hear the commandments and judgments which I teach you, that doing them you may live, and entering in you may possess the land which the Lord the God of your fathers will give you” (Deut 4:1). He exhorted them to keep God’s commandments and worship Him alone (Deut 4 - 6). He reminded them how God delivered them out of Egypt, fed them in the wilderness, and forgave them their sins (Deut 8 – 9). He also told them this prophecy: “*The Lord your God will raise up to you a PROPHET of your nation like unto me.*”<sup>126</sup> Listen to him” (Deut 18:15).

God commanded Moses: “Now therefore write a song, and teach it to the children of Israel, that they may know it by heart, and sing it by mouth, and this song may be unto me for a testimony among the children of Israel” (Deut 31:19). Moses composed a song for the people, which starts with, “Hear, O heavens, the things I speak, let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth. Let my doctrine gather as the rain, let my speech distil as the dew, as a shower upon the herb, and as drops upon the grass...”<sup>127</sup> (Deut 32:1-2)

After this God asked Moses to go up Mount Nebo to view the land of Canaan one last time and to die (Deut 32:49). Before he went up to the mountain, he blessed the tribes of Israel (Deut 33). Then he went up from the plains of Moab upon Mount Nebo, to the top of Phasga,<sup>128</sup> and there he died at the age of one hundred twenty years. God buried him in a place that no one knows. Israel mourned for him in the plains of Moab for thirty days. After that, there arose no more a prophet in Israel like Moses (Deut 34:7-12).

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<sup>126</sup> This prophecy was about Christ, who was a prophet like Moses. He was like Moses because He instituted the New Covenant as Moses instituted the Old. He also would show us the way to Heaven as Moses showed the Chosen People the way to the Promised Land.

<sup>127</sup> This is the known as *The Second Song of Moses*, Deut 32:1-43. The other song of Moses, composed after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, is known as *The First Song of Moses*, Ex 15:1-19.

<sup>128</sup> Probably another peak of Mount Nebo itself.

## CHAPTER 2 THE STORY OF JOSHUA

(Jos 1-24)

### Joshua

(Jos 1 – 2)

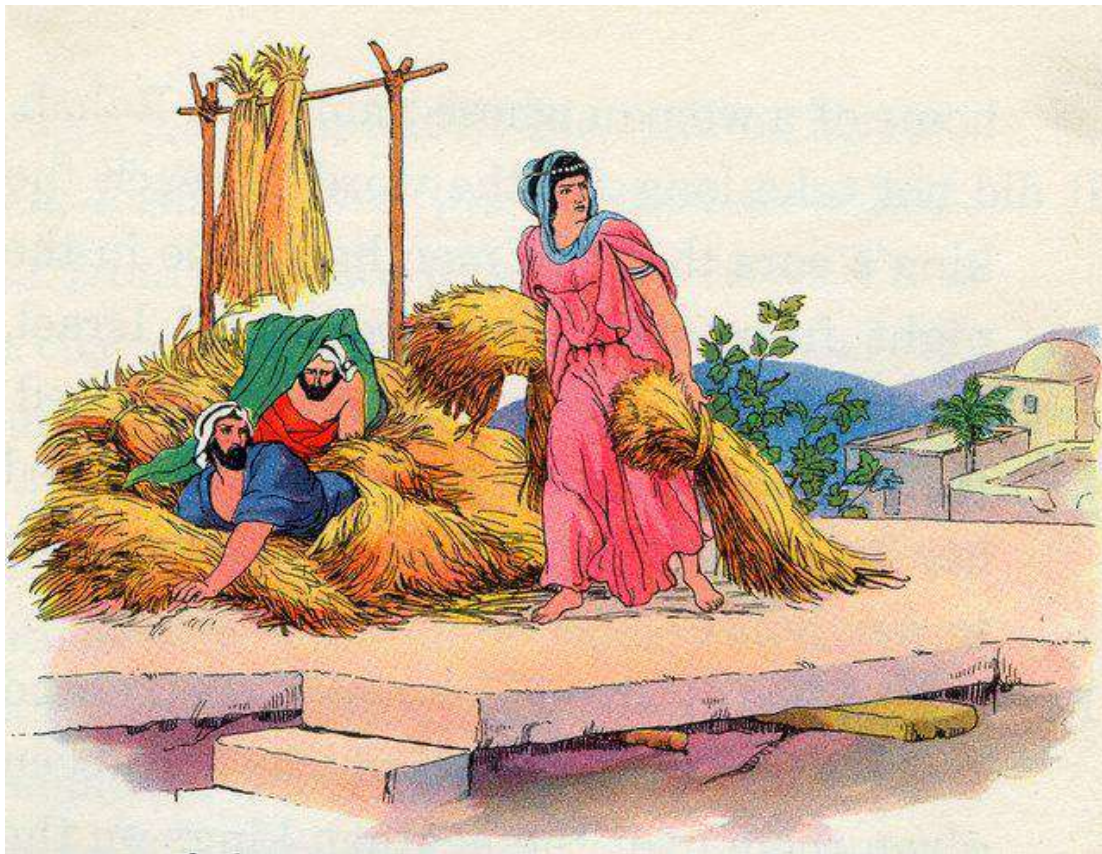


**Fig 2.2.1 Joshua**

After the death of Moses, the Lord spoke to Joshua and said to him: “Moses my servant is dead. Arise, and pass over the Jordan river, you and your people, into the land which I will give to the children of Israel. I will deliver to you every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon... No man shall be able to resist you all the days of your life” (Jos 1:1-5)



They needed first to conquer the city of Jericho. So, Joshua sent two spies into Jericho to view the land and the city. The two spies went and lodged in the house of a woman named Rahab, who knew that the God of Israel, who helped them out of Egypt, would also give Jericho to them. When the king of Jericho heard about the spies in Rahab's house, he ordered her to surrender them. But she hid them on the roof, covered them with stalks of flax, and told the king that she knew not where they had gone. The city gates were already shut. But she made a deal with the spies, that she would help them escape if the Israelites would spare her family when they come to take the city. The spies agreed. Rahab's house was near the walls that surrounded the city. When night came, she let the spies down out of a window above the wall with a scarlet cord that goes over the outside face of the wall. When the spies returned to Joshua they said to him, "The Lord has delivered Jericho into our hand, for all the inhabitants are afraid of us" (Jos 2:1-24).



**Fig 2.2.2 Rahab on the Roof Hides the Spies**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

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## The Fall of Jericho

(Jos 3 – 6)

In the morning Joshua commanded the priests to take up the ark of the covenant, and go before the people. As soon as the priests came into the Jordan, and their feet were dipped in part of the water, the waters upstream stood still, while the waters downstream ran down into the sea of the wilderness, leaving a dry passage for them and the people to cross over. The people passed over through the channel that was dried up,<sup>129</sup> and encamped on the east side of the city of Jericho.<sup>130</sup> There they celebrated the Pasch (or the Passover feast), after which the manna ceased to fall.<sup>131</sup> (Jos 3:6-5:12)

Jericho was a well-fortified city, protected by strong walls. Its gates were shut up for fear of the Israelites. The Lord said to Joshua: “Behold I give into your hands Jericho, its king, and all his valiant men. Let all your soldiers march around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day the priests shall take the seven trumpets which are used in the jubilee, and shall go before the ark of the covenant. You shall march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear the trumpets give a longer and broken tune, let all the people shout together with a very loud voice, and the walls of the city will fall to the ground. Then all men shall enter the city straight ahead from where they stand” (Jos 6:1-5).

All this was done, as God commanded. On the seventh day, after the people shouted, the walls of Jericho collapsed and the Israelites entered the city. They burned the city and destroyed everything in it, except gold and silver, and the vessels of brass and iron, for they consecrated these to the Lord. (Jos 6:6-20)

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<sup>129</sup> Jos 3:11-17

<sup>130</sup> Jos 4:19

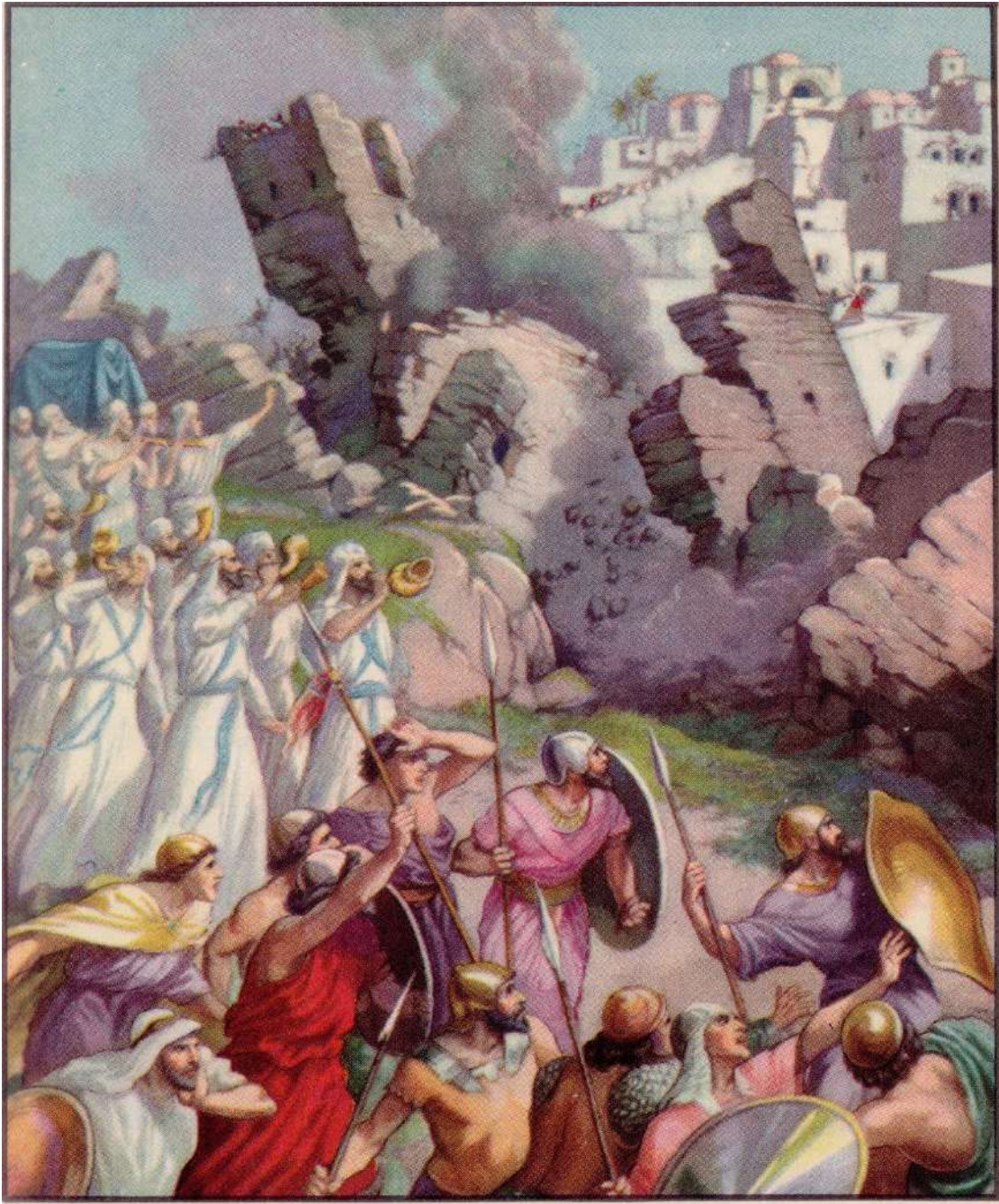
<sup>131</sup> Jos 5:12. God stopped supplying them with manna because their 40-year stay in the desert was over, and there was already enough food to find in the fruitful land of Canaan.

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**Fig 2.2.3 The Fall of Jericho**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

The Israelites killed all of Jericho's inhabitants, including the oxen, the sheep and other animals. However, they saved Rahab and her family because they helped the spies of Joshua to escape. (Jos 6:21-25)



## COMMENTARY

1. The noise that the people made did not cause the massive walls of Jericho to collapse, but it was the *signal* that God used to destroy the walls. Some scholars, who do not easily believe in miracles, speculate that the walls collapsed because of an earthquake. That the earthquake occurred right after the people shouted loudly was, however, itself an unexplained miracle.
2. Tell es-Sultan, the archaeological site of the ancient city, is about 6 miles from the Jordan River and northwest of the Dead Sea. Excavations that were started in the 19th century, and continued in the 1950s and 1990s, disclosed what remains of the ancient city. Early studies at first led to the conclusion that the city was destroyed in 1550 B.C. However, later studies of potteries found at the site proved that the destruction actually happened in the 1400's B.C., which was exactly the time when the Bible said Joshua entered Canaan. No one can prove that an earthquake occurred when the Israelites shouted, but at least archaeologists were able to verify, not only that the walls of Jericho did fall down, but that there was also massive destruction by fire in the city. See *Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?*
3. That God permitted all the inhabitants of Jericho (save Rahab and her family) to be killed was probably a punishment for their sins.

## **The Conquest of Canaan – (ca. 1399 B.C.)**

**(Jos 7 - 10)**

Jericho was not the only territory that the Israelites had to conquer. The Land of Canaan was vast, and Joshua and the Israelites had to fight many battles against the local kings to conquer all of Canaan. In the Battle of Ai, the Israelites were defeated because of their sins. Achan, of the tribe of Judah, had stolen some of the gold, silver and precious garment from Jericho that were consecrated to the Lord. God's anger was kindled against Israel because of this, and God permitted them to lose the fight. When Joshua found out, he and all the Israelites took Achan and his family, his possessions and animals, and the objects he stole from the Lord, to the valley of Achor where all Israel stoned them and burned them (Jos 7:1-26).

After this Joshua gathered his army and made a second attack against Ai. This time, by a clever strategy, the Israelites won the battle, killed all the inhabitants of Ai, set the city on flames, and hanged their king (Jos 8:1-29).

On another battle five kings of the Amorites joined forces against the Israelites and encamped at Gibeon. The Israelites waged war against their enemies and pursued them. As they were fleeing from the Israelites God cast a great hailstorm upon them, so that many more were killed by the hailstorm than by the sword. The approaching night and the sun setting down the horizon would have put an end to their victory. But Joshua, after talking to the Lord, and in the sight of all Israel, commanded the sun and the moon to stay still: "Move not, O sun, toward Gibeon, nor thou, O moon, toward the valley of Aijalon." The sun and the moon stood still in the midst of heaven until the Israelites had overcome their enemies. The sun hastened not to go down for a whole day, and there was not before, nor after, a long day like it. (Jos 10:1-14)





**Fig 2.2.4 Joshua Orders the Sun to Stop Moving**

Artist: Carlo Maratta (1625-1713)



Joshua won. After this battle God told Joshua to divide the Promised Land among the tribes of Israel. The map below shows the tribal allotments of the Land of Canaan (Jos 13 - 22).



**Fig 2.2.5 The Tribal Allotments of Israel**

Although Canaan had been divided among the various tribes of Israel, the Israelites did not completely conquer the land, and some Canaanites remained in their respective territories and adjacent lands. Before he died, Joshua admonished the Israelites to love God above all and avoid the sin of idolatry practiced by their Canaanite neighbors. He also discouraged them from making marriages with them and embracing their errors. (Jos 23)

Joshua lived to the age of one hundred ten years, and was buried in mount Ephraim. The bones of Joseph, which they brought from Egypt, were buried in Shechem (Jos 24:29-32).

### COMMENTARY

1. Note that Levi does not appear in the map. Although the Levites received forty-eight cities in different parts of the country (Jos 21:39), they were not permitted by the Law of Moses to become landowners because, *as priests*, “the Lord Himself is their inheritance” (Deut. 18:2).
2. Joseph’s name is not in the map either. But Ephraim and Manasseh were both sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:1), so together they constituted the house of Joseph.
3. The earth did not actually cease to rotate when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. Rather, a “miracle of the sun” probably happened, whereby both the Israelites and the Amorites experienced the *appearance* of a sun that stood still, while the rest of the world continued to see the sun moving continuously. It was a local apparition seen and witnessed only by the Israelites and the Amorites in the area, pretty much like the local “miracle of the sun” witnessed by many people, but only in Fatima, Portugal.

## CHAPTER 3 THE STORY OF THE JUDGES

(ca. 1350-1051 B.C.)

### The Judges

(Jgs 1 - 5)

After Joshua's death the Israelites were left without a leader, and they became vulnerable to their pagan neighbors in and around Canaan. The association of the Jews with the heathens also led to intermarriages with them that in turn resulted into their forgetfulness of their covenant with God and their subsequent fall into vice and idolatry. As a punishment for their repeated sins of infidelity and immorality, God allowed the Israelites to be subdued from time to time by their enemies. But whenever they repent, God would send them a strong military leader who would rescue them from their enemies and rule over them. These military rulers would sometimes preside over legal hearings, so they were also called "judges," although most of them ruled more than they judged. (Jgs 2:1-3:6)

For three hundred years the people of Israel lived under the rule of these "judges." The book of *Judges* mentioned thirteen judges, to which may be added Eli and Samuel (from *The First Book of Samuel*). One judge was a woman, Deborah, and was the only female judge. The names of the judges are given in the table below (See next page). Among the judges Gideon and Samson take several chapters in the book of *Judges*, while the others are described in just a few paragraphs. One judge, Shamgar, is mentioned in only one verse. In this Bible History only the story of Gideon, Samson and Samuel will be given. But the story of Samuel (Chapter 5) will be given after the story of Naomi and Ruth. Although neither Naomi nor Ruth was a judge, their charming story (Chapter 4) happened during the time of the Judges, so it will be given after the other judges but before Samuel.



<b>Judges</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Summary Description</b>
Othniel	Jgs 3:7-11	First judge following Joshua's death.
Ehud	Jgs 3:12-30	Fought the Moabites
Shamgar	Jgs 3:31	Led the Israelites against the Philistines
Deborah	Jgs 4-5	The only female judge; advised Barak to win against the Canaanites.
Gideon	Jgs 6-8	Defeated the Midianites with 300 men.
Abimelech	Jgs 9	Became a ruler by treachery.
Tola	Jgs 10:1-2	Judge for 23 years
Jair	Jgs 10:3-5	Judge for 22 years
Jepthah	Jgs 11-12:7	Defeated the Ammonites; judge for 6 years.
Ibzan	Jgs 12:8-10	Judge for 7 years
Elon	Jgs 12:11-12	Judge for 10 years
Abdon	Jgs 12:13-15	Judge for 8 years
Samson	Jgs 13-16	Judged Israel for 20 years and fought the Philistines single-handedly.
Eli	1 Sam 1-4:18	A High Priest; ruled the people from the sanctuary at Shiloh; judge for 40 years.
Samuel		Last judge of Israel before the reign of King Saul.

## Gideon

(Jgs 6-8)

During the time of Gideon, the Israelites were being troubled by the Midianites who lived near Canaan. One day, while Gideon was threshing and cleansing wheat, an angel appeared to him and said, “The Lord is with you, O most valiant of men. Go, in this your strength, and you shall deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites. Do not fear, you shall not die.” By God’s command Gideon took ten men and at night destroyed an altar of Baal, the false God of the Midianites. When the Midianites saw what Gideon had done, they gathered a large army, crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. (Jgs 6:11-33)

Unsure that he would be able to defeat the Midianites, Gideon asked God for a sign that He would really be with him: “If you will save Israel by my hand, I will put this fleece<sup>132</sup> of wool on the floor. If there be dew in the fleece only, and the ground dry, then I know that by my hand you will deliver Israel.” It was so. The next day, Gideon wrung the dew out of the fleece, and the dew that came out filled a vessel. He then said again to God, “Let not your wrath be kindled against me, if I try once more to seek a sign in the fleece. I pray this time that only the fleece be dry and the ground be wet with dew.” That night God did as he had requested. Only the fleece was dry, and the ground around it was wet with dew. (Jgs 6:36-40)

Gideon had 32,000 men to face the Midianites, but God asked Gideon to reduce the size of his army because He wanted Israel to see that they did not win by the strength of their army, but by His assistance.<sup>133</sup> So, Gideon selected only three hundred men to fight. (Jgs 7:1-6)

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<sup>132</sup> “Fleece” is a clothing similar to the wooly covering of a sheep.

<sup>133</sup> Actually, Gideon’s army of 32,000 men was already very small compared to the Midianite army, which had at least 135,000 men, based on Jgs 8:10. But to demonstrate the miracle that He was about to do, God asked Gideon to reduce his army even more.

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**Fig 2.3.1 Gideon Thanks God for the Miracle of the Dew**

Artist: Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

Gideon divided his army into three parts and gave the men trumpets in their hands, and pitchers containing lamps. “What you see me do, you do also,” he told them, “and when I blow my trumpet, you also blow yours.” Then he led his men at midnight to three places around the Midianite camp. He blew his trumpet, and all his men did the same. They clapped their pitchers and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and Gideon!” The Midianites were so troubled by the noise around their camp that they fled away crying



out and howling. The three hundred men persisted sounding the trumpet, and the rest of the Midianites began fighting among themselves, killing one another (Jgs 7:16-22).



**Fig 2.3.2 Gideon and His Three Hundred Men**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Gideon led the Israelites to more victories after this. The Israelites asked him, “Rule over us, because you have delivered us from the hand of the Midianites.” But he said to them, “I will not rule over you, but the Lord shall rule over you.” There was peace in Israel for 40 years while Gideon lived. But after his death the Israelites turned again to idolatry. (Jgs 8:22-35)

## COMMENTARY

1. In this story Gideon was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, as he overcame the Midianites with a few soldiers using only the sound of trumpets and the light of their torches as weapons, so did our Lord convert the Gentile world with a few apostles using only the voice of their preaching and the shining example of their good works.
2. The first “miracle of the dew,” when the **fleece was wet** with dew, may be viewed, according to St. Bernard, as a type of the Incarnation of Christ. His human nature was the fleece, while the Son of God who descended from Heaven and united Himself to it was the dew, just as it is written in the book of Psalms: “He (the Son of God) shall come down like rain upon the fleece...” (Ps 72:6). See *Sermons of St. Bernard on Advent & Christmas*, Part II (On the “Missus Est”, Homily II), p. 38.
3. The second miracle, when the **fleece was dry** while the ground was wet, may likewise be viewed as a type of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. As the fleece remained dry while all the ground around it was wet, so the Virgin Mary remained sinless while all humanity was stained by original sin. On the other hand, St. Ambrose saw in the drying of the fleece an allegory of the Holy Spirit (the dew) leaving Israel (the fleece) and being poured out on the Gentile world around them. See St. Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit*, Book I, #7.

## Samson

(Jgs 13-16)

The children of Israel became evil again in the sight of the Lord. As punishment for their sins, God allowed them to be troubled by another tribe, the Philistines.<sup>134</sup> Now there was a certain Israelite of the tribe of Dan whose wife was barren. An angel appeared to her and said, “You shall conceive and bear a son. Don’t let any razor touch his head, for he shall be a Nazarite<sup>135</sup> of God. He shall deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” The woman bore a son and called him Samson. Samson grew up and the spirit of the Lord began to be with him. (Jgs 13:1-25)

One day Samson went to Timnah and met a beautiful woman who happened to be one of the daughters of the Philistines. When he told his father and his mother of his intention to marry this woman, his father asked him, “Is there no woman among our people, that you must take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” But Samson told his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases my eyes.” So, Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah to ask for the hand of the Philistine woman. When they were at the vineyards of the town, behold a young lion met him raging and roaring. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he tore the lion in pieces with his bare hands. But he did not tell this to his parents.<sup>136</sup> (Jgs 14:1-6).

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<sup>134</sup> The Philistines were a group of people from the islands of the Mediterranean Sea. They came and settled along the southwestern coast of Canaan at about the same time when the Israelites also arrived in the Promised Land. The Philistines and the Israelites had since been rivals in the area, and had often engaged in battle against each other. When the Romans conquered the region in A.D. 2, they called it *Palestina*, after the name *Paleste*, which was the old name of the Philistines.

<sup>135</sup> A Nazarite was a person consecrated to the Lord, with vows such as refraining from intoxicating drinks, and keeping the hair uncut (Num 6:1-21).

<sup>136</sup> Samson’s parents must be some distance away for them not to see this event. That Samson kept his act of fighting a lion with his bare hands unknown to his parents shows that his modesty was greater than his bravery.





**Fig 2.3.3 Samson Kills a Lion with His Bare Hands**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)



Samson's strength was remarkable. When the Philistine woman's father would not let him see her because she took another husband, Samson became so angry that he caught three hundred foxes, coupled them tail to tail, fastened torches between their tails and burned the cornfields of the Philistines (Jgs 15:1-6). In another instance Samson killed a thousand Philistines using only the jaw-bone of a donkey (Jgs 15:15).

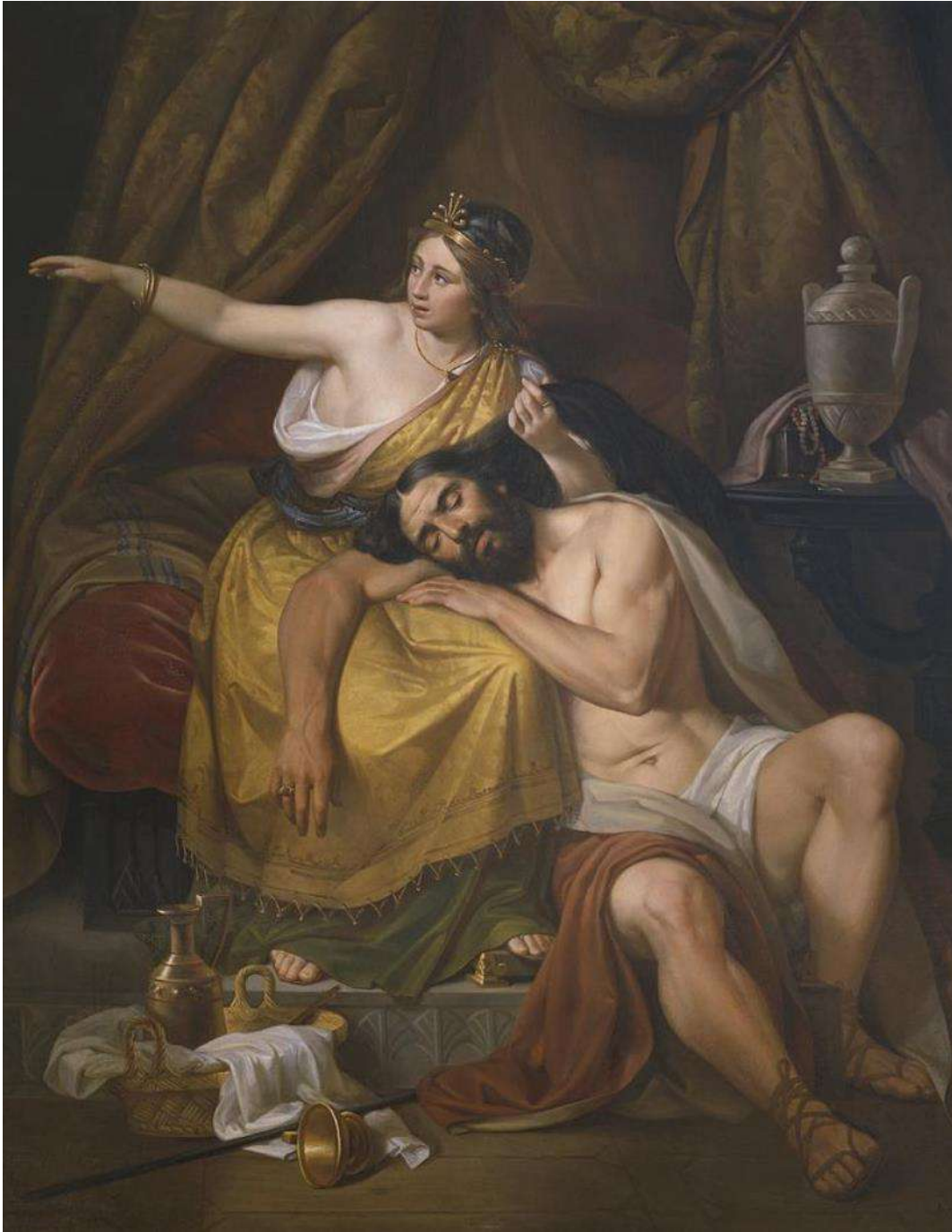
When the Philistines heard that Samson was in Gaza,<sup>137</sup> they surrounded him and set guards at the gate of the city. They watched there all night in silence, that in the morning they might kill him. But Samson slept until midnight. Upon rising, he took both doors of the gate, with their posts and bolts, and laying them on his shoulders, carried them up to the top of the hill overlooking Hebron (Jgs 16:1-3).

By these incidents the Philistines knew that, because of Samson's superior strength, they would not be able to beat him in battle even when he was alone. In Gaza Samson met and fell in love with another Philistine woman, a harlot named Delilah. When the Philistines learned this, they came to Delilah, bribed her and offered her eleven hundred pieces of silver if she would find out the secret of Samson's strength and how they could capture him. She agreed. (Jgs 16:4-5)

Delilah therefore begged Samson to tell her the source of his strength. At first, he refused, but because she would not let him rest, he finally told her the secret. "No razor has passed over my head," he said, "for I am a Nazarite and am consecrated to God from my mother's womb. I would lose my strength and be just like other men if my head be shaved." (Jgs 16:6-17)

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<sup>137</sup> Gaza was one of the cities of the Philistines.



**Fig 2.3.4 Delilah Calls the Barber**

Artist: Jose Salome Pina (1830-1909)

Delilah made Samson sleep upon her knees. When he fell asleep, she called a barber to cut off his hair, and Samson lost his extraordinary strength. (Jgs 16:16-19)





**Fig 2.3.5 Blind Samson in Prison**

Artist: Carl Bloch (1834-1890)

Now that Samson lost his extraordinary strength, the Philistines came and seized him. They pulled out his eyes, bound him in chains and cast him in prison where he was made to grind and work hard. But slowly his hair began to grow back. (Jgs 16:21-22)



**Fig 2.3.6 Samson Destroys the Temple of Dagon**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

One day, the princes of the Philistines were assembled together in the temple of Dagon, their false god. They were celebrating their victory over Samson. Then the people demanded that Samson be brought out of prison so that he might entertain them. Samson told the little boy who guided his steps, “Let me touch the pillars which support this whole house, and let me lean upon them, and rest a little.” About three thousand Philistines of both men and women were in the house watching Samson. Then he prayed, “O Lord God, remember me. Restore my former strength, that I may revenge myself on my enemies.” Grabbing the two pillars on which the house rested, he shook them violently until the whole house fell, killing himself and the Philistines that were there. Thus, he had killed many more Philistines by his death, than he had killed before in his life (Jgs 16:23-30).



Although Samson was the last judge mentioned in the book of *Judges*, the book continues with additional stories, such as the story of Micah's Idol (Jgs 17-18) and the Battle of Gibeah (Jgs 19-21). Because these stories do not feature a specific judge, they will not be given anymore in this book. However, the story of Ruth, although not a judge, will be given separately because she showed a beautiful example of faithfulness, and because she also happened to be the great grandmother of King David, an important ancestor of Christ. The story of Ruth, which also happened during the time of the judges, will be followed by the story of Samuel, the last of the judges, and the one who would anoint Saul as the first king of Israel.



## COMMENTARY

1. Many scholars find a parallel between Samson and our Lord Jesus Christ. Samson's birth was announced by an angel, just as our Lord's birth was announced by the angel Gabriel. Samson was betrayed for money, and so was our Lord, whom Judas delivered to the Jews for a few pieces of silver. Samson was bound and mocked, and finally gave his life to defeat his enemies. Christ was also bound and mocked, and gave his life to defeat Satan. Therefore, if Gideon was a type of Jesus Christ, so was Samson.
2. Samson kept his strength as long as he kept his vow of avoiding intoxicating drinks and keeping his hair long. But because he was obsessed with Delilah and failed to control his passions, he became vulnerable to her wiles and seductions, and eventually told her the secret of his strength. In this Samson did not typify Christ, but the weakness of our human nature. The mighty and unconquerable Samson, who strangled a lion with his bare hands, failed to strangle his passions, and became a captive of his enemies. St. Ambrose lamented this, saying: "Would that he had been as careful to preserve grace, as he was strong to overcome the beast!" (St. Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit*, Book II, Introduction, #5)
3. Strictly speaking, the secret of Samson's extraordinary strength lies in his consecration to God, not in the fact that his hair had not been cut. His long hair was only a sign that he had kept his vow and remained faithful to Him. He remained strong as long as he kept his vow. When he revealed his secret to Delilah, and thereby gave her the opportunity to cut his hair, he had effectively abandoned God and violated his vow for the sake of this woman. In turn he was also abandoned by God and was left to his ordinary and purely human strength.
4. That Samson was betrayed twice by Philistine women illustrates the dangers of having an intimate relationship with people without faith. This was the reason why Joshua, before he died, admonished the Jews to avoid any association with their heathen neighbors, for they were idolaters (Jos 24). That the Israelites so easily forgot their promises to Joshua was the reason why they had often been mistreated by their idol-worshipping neighbors, and why God often had to send a judge or military leader to rescue them from both moral and physical depravity.

5. In the story of Samson and Delilah it was said that Samson single-handedly caused the entire temple of Dagon<sup>138</sup> to collapse, thus killing many Philistines and their leaders. This story might seem incredible at first until one learns how a Philistine temple was typically built. In 1972 a Philistine temple had been uncovered by archaeologists in the western part of central Israel. The temple is in Tel Qasile, which is north of Tel Aviv. This temple is small, measuring only 26' x 47' in plan, but it has a unique architecture. Its roof is basically supported by two middle pillars, about seven feet apart. A beam probably rests on top of these pillars, and together they support the rest of the roof structure. The pillars are made of wood, although they rest on stone foundations. Excavations made in 1981-1996 at Tel Mique, another archaeological site 21 miles south of Tel Aviv, uncovered other Philistine temples that also show the same centrally-located two-pillar constructions. Now, we know that the temple of Dagon that Samson destroyed was a much bigger building, because it held so many people (Jgs 16:27). But this temple is presently under the city of Gaza, so it cannot be unearthed. However, if the old temple of Dagon was similar in construction to the temples at Tel Qasile and Tel Mique, then it probably had the same centrally located two-pillar construction. It is conceivable that a big man with the super-human strength of Samson could dislodge these posts from their foundation just by grabbing them together – with the left hand on one pillar and the right hand on the other – just the way the Bible said it happened (Jgs 16:29-30). Sure, archaeology will never be able to prove that Samson was that strong, but at least it confirmed the two-pillar construction of the Philistine temple described by the Bible. The point is this: If the Bible is correct in describing this particular detail (the architecture), then it is probably correct also in speaking of the other details (Samson's strength) in the story. See *The Story of Samson and Archaeology*.

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<sup>138</sup> Dagon was the Philistine grain god that looked half man, half fish – like a merman.



**Fig 2.3.7 – Dagon**

## CHAPTER 4 THE STORY OF RUTH - (ca. 1140 B.C.)

(The Book of Ruth)

During the time of the judges, when the judges ruled Israel, there came a famine in the land. A certain man from Bethlehem of Judah therefore took his wife, Naomi, and his two sons – Mahlon and Chilion – and went to live in the land of Moab. The man, whose name was Elimelech, died there, and his wife remained with her sons. Later the two sons took wives of the women of Moab, one of which was Orpha, and the other Ruth.<sup>139</sup> After being married for ten years, the two sons also died, leaving their mother Naomi alone with her sons' wives. (Ruth 1:1-5)

When she heard that the famine had passed and there was now food in the land, Naomi decided to return to her own country. She therefore told her daughters-in-law, “Go home to your mothers, and may the Lord deal mercifully with you as you have dealt with me.” (Ruth 1:6-8)

In hearing this Orpha and Ruth wept and said, “We will go on with you to your people.” But Naomi answered them, “Return, my daughters. Why come with me? Do I have more sons that you may hope for husbands from me?” They raised their voices and wept again. Orpha kissed her mother-in-law and left. But Ruth stuck close to her mother-in-law. Naomi told her, “Look, your sister has returned to her people and her gods. Go with her.” Ruth answered, “Do not ask that I separate from you and leave. For wherever you go, there I shall go. And wherever you live, there I shall live. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God, too. The land where you die, there I shall die and be buried. Let nothing other than death separate me from you.” (Ruth 1:9-17)

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<sup>139</sup> It was Mahlon who married Ruth (Ruth 4:10) and, therefore, Chilion who married Orpha.





**Fig 2.4.1 Ruth Begs Naomi that She Might Stay with Her**

Artist: Philip Hermogenes Calderon (1833-1898)

Seeing that Ruth was firmly determined to go with her, Naomi did not persuade her anymore to return to her own people. Together they went to her old home in Bethlehem of Judah. It was the beginning of the harvest season when they arrived in Bethlehem. Ruth told her mother-in-law, “Let me go into the field, that I may collect the ears of grain that fall from the hands of the reapers.”<sup>140</sup> Naomi answered her, “Go, my daughter.” (Ruth 1:18-2:2)

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<sup>140</sup> It is usually the case that the reapers would not reap to the very edges of the field, nor gather those that had already fallen from their hands. They would leave them for the poor to collect (Lev 23:22). Since Naomi and Ruth were poor, Ruth volunteered to collect the ears of corn that fell from the hands of the reapers.

She went, therefore, and picked up the ears of grain that fell from the hands of the reapers. When Boaz, the owner of the field, came and saw Ruth, he asked the man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose maid is this?” He answered him, “This is the Moabitess, who came with Naomi from the land of Moab. She asked if she could collect the ears of grain that remained after the reapers had taken their harvest. She has been in the field from morning till now, and has not gone home for one moment.” Boaz said to Ruth, “Hear me, daughter, do not go collecting grain in any other field. Just stay in my field and follow my maidservants where they reap. I have instructed my manager not to molest you. And if you are thirsty, go to the vessels, and drink of the waters whereof the servants drink.” (Ruth 2:3-9)

Ruth fell on her face and said to him, “How do I find favor before your eyes, that you should take notice of me who am a stranger from another country?” Boaz answered her, “All has been told me about your kindness to your mother-in-law, how you left your parents and the land of your birth to keep her company. May you now receive a full reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have fled.” Boaz further told her, “At mealtime come here and eat of the bread, and dip your bread in the vinegar.” So at mealtime Naomi sat at the side of the reapers and ate. After that she continued collecting the ears of grain as before. (Ruth 2:10-15)

Before he left, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, “If she would even reap with you, hinder her not. And let some of your harvest fall on purpose, that she may gather them without shame.” Ruth worked all day until evening. Then she brought her harvest home and gave them to Naomi. “Who let you gather all these?” asked Naomi. Ruth said that the man’s name was Boaz. Naomi exclaimed: “Blessed is he, for the same kindness he showed to the living, he has kept for the dead. He is our relative!”<sup>141</sup> (Ruth 2:15-20)

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<sup>141</sup> Naomi meant to say that the kindness that Boaz showed to Ruth was kindness for his deceased husband, who was probably his brother or cousin.



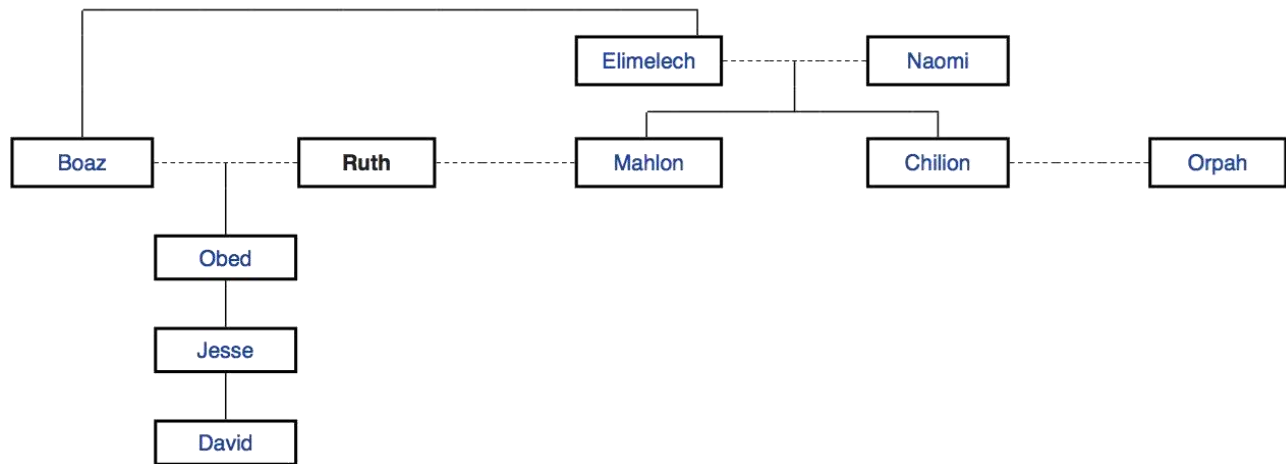


**Fig 2.4.2 Ruth in the Field of Boaz**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)



Eventually Boaz married Ruth because he believed her to be a virtuous woman. And Ruth loved him because of his kindness. God blessed their marriage with a son whom they named Obed. And Obed became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, the king. (Ruth 4:13-17)



**Fig 2.4.3 Genealogy Showing the Descent of David from Ruth**

## COMMENTARY

1. Ruth was a Moabite, and probably worshipped false gods, too. But once she had known the true God from Naomi and her son, she kept her faith and did not want to remain anymore in the land of Moab. This was the reason why she insisted on going to Israel with Naomi. In this she prefigured the early Christian Church, which consisted mostly of the Gentiles who converted to Christianity. Ruth showed by her example that even a pagan can share in the salvation and blessings that proceed from Israel when he or she converts and believes in the true faith.
2. Boaz married Ruth for her virtue, which he valued more highly than riches or gold. God rewarded him for this, because by his marriage with Ruth he became an ancestor of our Lord.

## CHAPTER 5 THE STORY OF SAMUEL - (ca. 1120 B.C.)

### (1 Sam 1-7)

Eli and Samuel were the last two judges of Israel. However, their story is not found in the book of *Judges* but in the *First Book of Samuel*.

When Eli, the High Priest, was Judge in Israel there lived at Mount Ephraim a virtuous couple named Elkanah and his wife Hannah. Because she had no child, Hannah multiplied her prayers begging God to give her a son. One day she went to Shiloh to pray in the Tabernacle of the Lord. For, at that time the Ark was in Shiloh. There she made a vow, saying: “O Lord of hosts, if you look down and be mindful of me, and give to your servant a son, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.” When Eli saw her, she explained what her prayer was about. (1 Sam 1:1-15)

It came to pass that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called him Samuel. Hannah kept Samuel until she weaned him. Then, even when Samuel was yet very young,<sup>142</sup> Hannah brought him to the temple in Shiloh and presented him to Eli. “This is the child that I prayed for, and the Lord has granted my prayer,” she said. “Therefore, I now give him to serve the Lord all the days of his life.” They adored the Lord there and Hannah prayed a song of praise (1 Sam 1:20-28):

*My heart has rejoiced in the Lord,  
And my horn is exalted in my God.  
My mouth is enlarged over my enemies  
Because I have rejoiced in your salvation...*<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Although the Bible did not say the age of Samuel when he was brought to the temple, he probably was around 3 or 4 years old, based on 2 Macc 7:27.

<sup>143</sup> This is the famous *Song of Hannah* (1 Sam 2:1-10) that some biblical scholars thought was the basis of the Virgin Mary’s *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). Indeed, there is some similarity between the *Magnificat* of Mary and the *Song of Hannah*, but there are also significant differences. The Virgin Mary was not a copycat; her song contained *prophecies* not found in Hannah’s.



**Fig 2.5.1 Hannah Presents the Young Samuel to Eli**

Artist: Frank William Warwick Topham (1838-1924)



Now, Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas,<sup>144</sup> who also served as priests in the temple. They were wicked and had no fear of the Lord. Often, they would take away by force the victims that people brought to offer as sacrifices in the temple. Their sins repelled the people from making sacrifices to the Lord. In addition, they would have sexual relations with women who served in the sanctuary. (1 Sam 2:12-22)

Meanwhile Samuel continued to grow and minister to the Lord before Eli. One night, the Lord called Samuel in his sleep. He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am.” But Eli said, “I did not call you. Go back and sleep.” Samuel went back and slept. The Lord called Samuel again. Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Eli answered: “I did not call you, my son. Return and sleep.” (1 Sam 3:1-6)

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither had the word of the Lord been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again the third time. He arose and went to Eli saying, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli understood that it was the Lord calling the child. So, he told Samuel: “Go and sleep. If He calls you again, say ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant listens.’” Samuel went back to bed. (1 Sam 3:7-9)

The Lord called Samuel again as He had called before: “Samuel, Samuel.” Then Samuel said, “Speak, Lord, for your servant listens.” The Lord then spoke to Samuel and told him to warn the High Priest Eli that he and his family would be punished because he did not correct his sons’ wickedness. Samuel slept till morning, and was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had revealed. But Eli asked him what it was that the Lord told him. Then Samuel told him everything. Eli answered, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what is good in His sight.” (1 Sam 3:10-18)

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<sup>144</sup> Their names were given in 1 Sam 2:34 and in 1 Sam 4:4.



**Fig 2.5.2 Samuel Reports to Eli what God Revealed to him.**

Artist: John Singleton Copley (1738-1815)

(Note: Eli was a high priest. Did you notice the breastplate he was wearing?)

Samuel grew, and all Israel came to know him as a faithful prophet of the Lord. Everything that He told Eli about the punishment that he and his family would receive from the Lord happened. For, after some time the Israelites were defeated by the Philistines in battle, Eli's sons were killed, and the Ark of the Covenant was taken away from them. When Eli heard the news, he fell from his seat, broke his neck and died. (1 Sam 3:19-4:18)

The Philistines took the Ark and brought it into the temple of Dagon, their false god. They placed the ark beside the statue of Dagon. But the Lord also punished them for this. He made the statue of Dagon fall twice before the Ark, and many people became sick of tumors and died. In addition, a multitude of mice came forth in their villages and fields, so that at last the Philistines resolved to return the Ark back to Israel (1 Sam 5:1-12).

The Ark was brought to Bethshemesh. When some of the Bethshemites looked inside the Ark, God slew them<sup>145</sup> (1 Sam 6:19). Then the Ark was moved to the house of Aminadab at Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for 20 years (1 Sam 7:2). Samuel, who had now grown up and succeeded Eli as Judge of Israel, counseled the Israelites: "If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only, then He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." The people put away their idols, fasted and repented. When the Philistines decided to attack Israel again, the Lord made a great thunder that terrified the Philistines, and the Israelites defeated them. The Israelites recovered the cities taken from them by the Philistines, and there was once again peace between Israel and the Philistines<sup>146</sup> (1 Sam 7:3-14).

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<sup>145</sup> The Ark was the most sacred object in Israel, which is why no one was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies but the High Priest (Lev 16). No one may touch the vessels, nor even look into the ark out of curiosity. These were regarded as acts of desecration punishable by death (Num 4:15, 20).

<sup>146</sup> The Bible said that there was "peace between Israel and the *Amorites*," indicating that the Philistines were actually Amorites, who were descendants of the fourth son of Canaan (Gen 10:16).



## COMMENTARY

There are several moral lessons that could be learned from the story of Samuel.

- a. Samuel's mother, **Anna**, shows how we ought to keep our promises to the Lord. As soon as the boy Samuel was old enough not to depend on his mother's milk, she brought him to the temple to serve the Lord.
- b. **Samuel** showed us how we should be ready to do God's will. He was obedient to Eli, and listened to God intently in his prayer.



Fig 2.5.3 “Speak, Lord, for Your Servant Listens” (1 Sam 3:10)

Artist: Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)

- c. **Eli** was a God-fearing man. But notice how even he was punished by the Lord for failing to correct his sons.
- d. The **Philistines** won against the Israelites when they took the Ark of the Covenant away. But their victory was short-lived because God punished them for their acts of violence and desecration. Their false god fell before the ark; their villages were plagued by pestilence, sickness and death; and a great thunder caused them to panic and lose the war against the Israelites.

## CHAPTER 6 THE STORY OF KING SAUL

(ca. 1050 B.C.)

### Saul Anointed as King

(1 Sam 8-10)

When Samuel was old, he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel. But his sons were not just like their father. They accepted bribes and perverted judgment. So, the ancients came to Samuel and said to him: “Behold you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Appoint a king to judge us, as all nations have.”<sup>147</sup> Samuel was unhappy with their request, for he wanted God alone to be their king. Still the Lord told Samuel to listen to the voice of the people, and give them a king. At the same time, He told Samuel to warn the people that their king would take their fields, and a tenth of their harvest. He would make them his servants, and they would regret that they had asked for a king. (1 Sam 8:1-18)

Now there was a man of the tribe of Benjamin who lost his donkeys. He asked his son, Saul, to go out and look for the lost donkeys. Saul was a valiant and good-looking man, and there was not among the children of Israel a better-looking person than he. Saul and his companion set out to look for the lost donkeys, but could not find them. They knew about the prophet Samuel, so they thought of asking him to see if he could tell them where to find the donkeys. But on the day before Saul met Samuel, God spoke to Samuel and said, “Tomorrow, I will send you a man of the land of Benjamin. You shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel.” (1 Sam 9:1-16)

When Saul came, Samuel said, “I am the prophet whom you seek. Go up and eat with me today, and I will let you go in the morning. As for the donkeys, be not solicitous because they have been found.” (1 Sam 9:18-20)

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<sup>147</sup> The Jews did not want a judge to rule them anymore. They wanted to have a king, as their neighboring nations had.

The next morning Samuel assembled the people, took a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head and said, "Behold the Lord has anointed you prince of His people. You shall deliver His people from their enemies." The people cried out, "God save the king" (1 Sam 10:1-24).



**Fig 2.6.1 Samuel Anoints Saul King of Israel**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



## Saul's Disobedience

(1 Sam 11-16)

In the beginning of his reign God was with Saul. When the Ammonites threatened to pluck out the right eyes of the people of Jabesh-gilead, Saul came to the rescue and defeated them easily (1 Sam 11). But Saul had been disobedient, too, and this made him lose God's favor. In one instance Samuel told Saul, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Go and smite Amalek,<sup>148</sup> and utterly destroy all that he has. Spare nothing, nor desire anything that is his, but slay both men and women, including the oxen, the sheep, camel and ass." Saul defeated the Amalekites and killed the men, women and children, but he spared Agag their king, disobeying the Lord. Also, he killed all the animals that were vile and good for nothing, but he spared the beautiful, fat ones. When Samuel asked him why he did not obey God's command, and spared the best of the flocks and herds, Saul said that they were meant to be offered as sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel replied, "Does the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that His voice be obeyed? *Obedience is better than sacrifices*, and better to listen rather than to offer the fat of rams." Then Samuel said to him, "Forasmuch as you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has also rejected you from being king" (1 Sam 15:1-23).

God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a successor to King Saul, because Saul's reign was going to end. In Bethlehem there was a man, named Jesse,<sup>149</sup> who had several sons, one of whom would be chosen as the next king of Israel. Samuel wondered who the next king would be, but God said that He would show him. He also told Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature... *man sees those things that appear, but the Lord beholds the heart*"<sup>150</sup> (1 Sam 16:1-7)

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<sup>148</sup> This refers to the nation of the Amalekites, which is designated by the name of its founder, Amalek.

<sup>149</sup> This Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

<sup>150</sup> These words of the Lord indicate to Samuel that God's choice of a king would not be based on a man's looks or appearance, but on the nature of his heart or character.

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When Samuel came to Bethlehem, Jesse brought his sons to Samuel one by one. After meeting seven of them Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any one of these. Are these all the sons you have?” Jesse answered: “There remains yet another one, the young one who keeps the sheep.” Samuel told Jesse, “Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down until he comes hither.” Therefore, Jesse sent and brought David to Samuel. He was ruddy and beautiful to behold, and of a comely face. The Lord told Samuel, “Anoint him, for this is he.” Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed David in the midst of his brothers.<sup>151</sup> The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. (1 Sam 16:8-13)



**Fig 2.6.2 Samuel Anoints the Young David as Successor to King Saul**

Artist: Felix-Joseph Barrias (1822-1907)

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<sup>151</sup> Although David was anointed to be king, he did not actually begin his reign until the death of King Saul.

Saul was depressed because the Lord had rejected his kingship. His servants said to him, “Order your servants to find a man skillful with the harp, that he may play for you when you are sad.” Saul said to his servants, “Provide me someone that can play well, and bring him to me.” His servants brought him the shepherd boy David, for he was also a skillful player of the harp.<sup>152</sup> Saul liked David exceedingly and made him his musician and armorbearer. Whenever he was sad, he would ask David to play music, and this would refresh his soul and make him feel better. (1 Sam 16:14-23)



**Fig 2.6.3 David Plays the Harp for Saul**

Artist: Julius Kronberg (1850-1921)

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<sup>152</sup> At this time Saul did not know that Samuel had already anointed David to be his successor.



## David and Goliath

(1 Sam 17)

David was still very young when the Philistines again made war with the Israelites. They camped on a mountain on one side, and the Israelites stood on another mountain on the other side. There was a valley between them. From the camp of the Philistines there came out a man, named Goliath, whose height was six cubits and a span (or 9'-9"). He had a helmet of brass and his body was covered with heavy armor. Every day for forty days he cried out to the Israelites: "Choose out a man from among you, and let him come down and fight me. If he kills me, then we will be your servants. If I kill him, then you shall become our servants." In hearing these words Saul and all the Israelites were greatly afraid. Goliath came every day repeating his challenge. The three eldest sons of Jesse were with Saul, but none of them dared to face Goliath. (1 Sam 17:1-16)

One day Jesse asked David to bring food to his brothers in the camp. When he arrived and heard about Goliath's challenge, he said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the army of the living God? I will fight him." But Saul said to him, "You are but a boy, while Goliath is a warrior from his youth." David answered: "I am my father's shepherd. When a lion or a bear came to take a sheep from my father's flock, I rose up and killed it. The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with you." (1 Sam 17:17-37)

David took his shepherd's staff, then chose five stones out of the brook and put them into his bag. Then he took his sling and faced Goliath. When Goliath saw the young David, he said, "Am I a dog that you come to fight me with a staff?" David said in reply: "You come with a sword, a spear and a shield, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, Who will deliver

you into my hands.” When Goliath came closer to David, David quickly took a stone from his bag and threw it with his sling. The stone struck Goliath in the forehead, and he fell on his face upon the ground. David drew Goliath’s sword out of the sheath and cut off his head. (1 Sam 17:40-51)



**Fig 2.6.4 David Kills Goliath**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled away and the Israelites pursued them. Impressed by the young boy’s victory over the giant, Saul asked David, “Of whose family are you?” And David said, “I am the son of your servant, Jesse, from Bethlehem.” (1 Sam 17:51-58)

## COMMENTARY

1. The victory of David over Goliath did not result merely from his skill with the sling, but from his trust and confidence in God's help. He said, "The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam 17:37). David's victory over Goliath shows that he who places his confidence in God will overcome even the greatest difficulties in saving his soul.
2. Although Saul told David that he was "but a boy," David was not a mere lad anymore when he fought Goliath because the Bible described him as "one of great strength, and a man fit for war" (1 Sam 16:18). Saul's remark that David was "but a boy" should be understood as meaning that he was not yet old enough to be a part of the king's army and had no experience in combat, for one has to be at least 20 years old to be able to fight in the army (Num 1:3). Possibly David was almost, but not quite twenty years old when he fought Goliath.
3. Apparently, David was not merely a skillful harpist, but was also skilled in the use of the sling. This was not unusual because during that time the sling was regarded as a military weapon. The Bible said that in the tribe of Benjamin alone there were seven hundred fighters, "every one of them able to sling a stone at a hair without missing" (Jgs 20:16). As a confirmation of the use of slings and stones during the time of David, archaeologists in one excavation site, Khirbet el-Maqatir, 10 miles north of Jerusalem, were able to dig out nearly three dozen sling stones, indicating the popularity of the weapon. See *Slings and Stones*.



## David and Jonathan

(1 Sam 18 - 20)

Saul took David that day and would not let him return to his father's house. When he was finished talking to David, his son Jonathan<sup>153</sup> made a covenant with David,<sup>154</sup> for he loved him as his own soul.<sup>155</sup> As a token of this covenant Jonathan gave David his coat and the rest of his garments, including his sword, his bow, and the belt around his waist. (1 Sam 18:1-4)

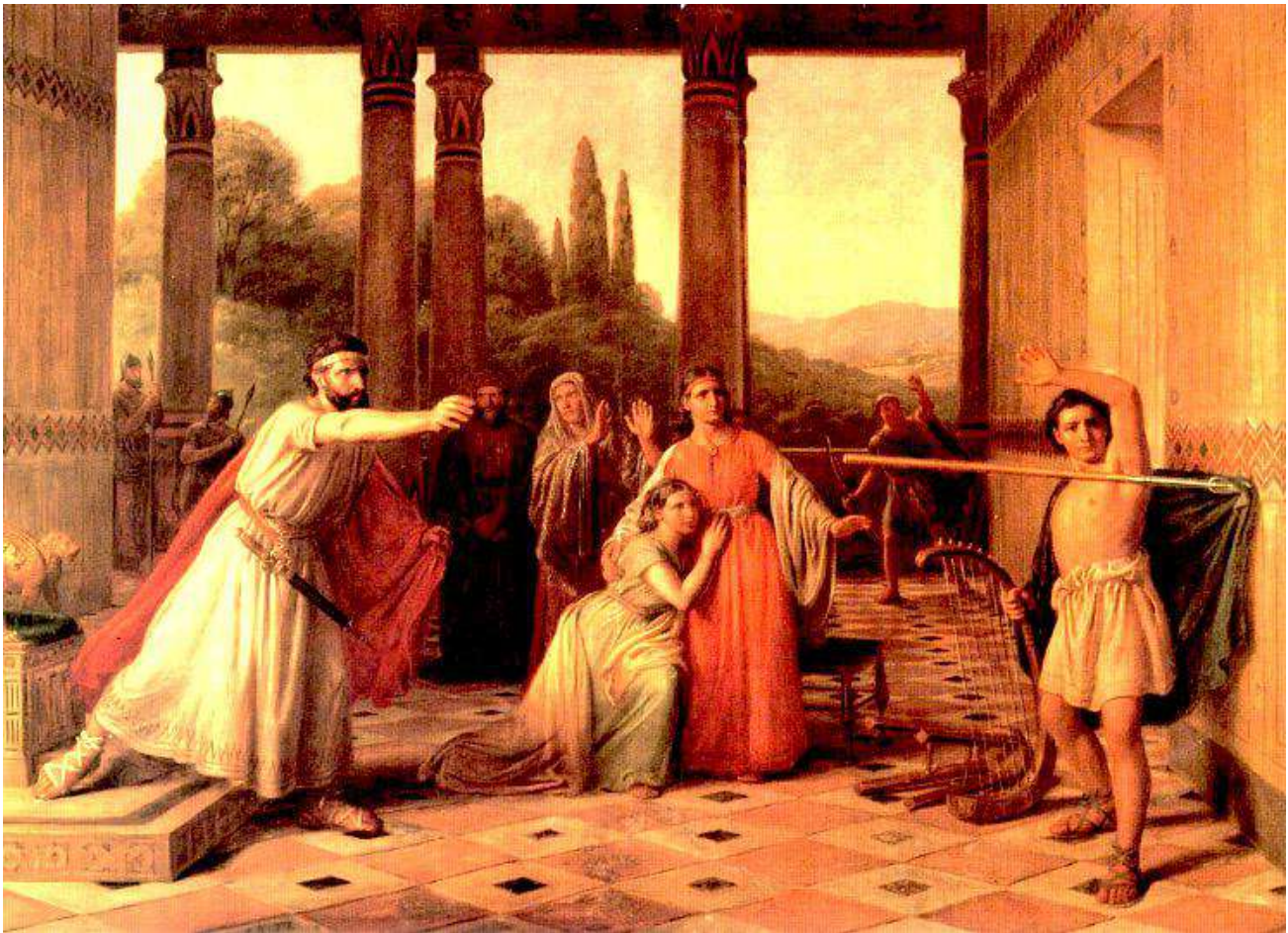
David served Saul and went out to whatever assignment Saul sent him. Saul put him in command over the soldiers, and he was acceptable in the eyes of all the people, especially in the eyes of Saul's servants. When David returned after killing the giant Goliath, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, dancing and singing, "Saul slew his thousand, and David his ten thousands." Saul was exceedingly angry when he heard the women giving David more credit than him for their victory over the Philistines. From that day onward Saul did not look on David with a good eye. One day, while David was playing the harp, an evil spirit came to Saul. He threw a spear toward David, thinking that he could nail him to the wall. But David got away. (1 Sam 18:5-11)

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<sup>153</sup> Jonathan was the first son of Saul (1 Sam 14:49), and was with him in some of the early battles he waged against the Philistines (1 Sam 13:2-3).

<sup>154</sup> In Holy Scripture a covenant is an agreement that creates a familial bond. Jonathan and David's covenant means that they agreed to regard each other like very close family members.

<sup>155</sup> This was an honest *love of friendship*, not a homosexual love as some people had insinuated. The basis of the friendship between David and Jonathan was not lust but their common confidence in the power of God. Remember why David dared to fight Goliath? Because he trusted that God would deliver the Philistine giant into his hands. Well, that same confidence in God was in the heart of Jonathan when he defeated an entire garrison of armed soldiers, because "the Lord," he said, "has delivered them into the hands of Israel" (1 Sam 14:12). When Jonathan saw David's great confidence in God, he saw himself in David, and "his soul was knit with the soul of David" (1 Sam 18:1).



**Fig 2.6.5 Saul Throws His Spear at David**

Artist: Constantin Hansen (1804-1880)

Saul feared David because the Lord was with him. He thought of a devious plan to get rid of David by making him fight the Philistines. “Let not my hand be upon him,” said Saul, “but let the hands of the Philistines be upon him.” So, he offered the hand of his daughter, Michal, to David provided that he kills a hundred Philistines. David went to battle and came back unhurt, after killing two hundred Philistines. Disappointed, Saul gave Michal to David to be his wife. Michal loved David, but Saul began to fear David even more. (1 Sam 18:12-29)

Saul spoke to Jonathan and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But because Jonathan loved David, he went and warned David of his father's evil intent. Then he reminded his father of David's innocence and the good things David had done for him, and why he should not plot to kill him. For the meantime Saul's anger was appeased and he swore, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be slain." (1 Sam 19:1-6)

But war broke again between Israel and the Philistines. David went and fought the Philistines, defeating them again and killing a great number of them. Saul's jealousy was aroused and once more he tried to nail David to the wall with a spear, but missed him. With Michal's help David fled from the king's court. (1 Sam 19:8-12)

Jonathan advised David to hide and not to return to his father's house. When David did not show up for dinner, Saul asked Jonathan where David was. Jonathan made an excuse, saying that David went to Bethlehem to attend a solemn sacrifice in the city. Saul knew his son's affection for David, and that he was covering up for him. Saul told Jonathan that as long as David was alive, he would not get the throne and, therefore, he deserved to be put to death. Jonathan replied, "Why shall he die? What has he done?" Hearing this, Saul took a spear to strike him. Jonathan rose from the table and went to the field to find David. Jonathan found David and, kissing one another,<sup>156</sup> they wept together, although David wept more. Then Jonathan told David to leave. Before they separated, they renewed the covenant they made before the Lord. Then Jonathan said to David, "The Lord be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever." David left and Jonathan returned to the city. (1 Sam 20:1-43)

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<sup>156</sup> Kissing is a common gesture for greeting friends among middle eastern people. Indeed, even Judas the traitor kissed our Lord on the night that he betrayed Him (Matt 26:48-49). The kiss between David and Jonathan was not an amorous kiss.



## COMMENTARY

1. Many pictures of David and Jonathan portray them as if they were both young men of about the same age. But the truth is that Jonathan was at least 28 years older than David! We know this from facts given in the Bible itself. On the second year of his reign, Saul made war with the Philistines (1 Sam 13:1-2). At this time Jonathan commanded 1000 men of Saul's army (1 Sam 13:2). Per Moses' law, Jonathan had to be at least 20 years old to be able to fight in the army (Num 1:3). This means that Jonathan must be at least 20 years old already when Saul made war with the Philistines. But Acts 13:21 said that Saul reigned for a total of 40 years (that is, until his death). Therefore, Jonathan, who was a soldier on the *second* year of Saul's reign, was at least  $20 + (40 - 2) = 58$  years old when King Saul died. But Saul and his sons, including Jonathan, died on the same day, according to 1 Sam 31:6. Now, if David, as Saul's successor, began to reign when Saul and Jonathan died, and he was 30 years old when he started his reign as king of Israel (2 Sam 5:4), then the age difference between Jonathan and David must be at least  $58 - 30 = 28$  years.
2. Notice how ungrateful and unjust envy makes a man. It was **envy**, a capital vice, that led King Saul to make two attempts at David's life, and also an attempt at his son's life. He did not have enough confidence in God to fight Goliath; then when he heard the women praising David more than him, he wanted to kill him.

## The Death of King Saul

(1 Sam 24, 26, 31; 2 Sam 1)

David left Jonathan to escape the wrath of King Saul. One day King Saul found out that David and his men were hiding in the wilderness of Engedi. With three thousand men King Saul searched for David. King Saul came to a place where there was a cave, and decided to sleep there. Now David and his men were hiding in the inner part of the cave. While King Saul was asleep, David and his men rose up and were going to kill him. But after cutting off the hem of Saul's robe, David stopped his men saying, "The Lord be merciful to me, that I do no such thing to my master... because he is the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam 24:1-7).



**Fig 2.6.6 David Spares King Saul's Life**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

On another occasion, shortly after the death of Samuel,<sup>157</sup> King Saul was informed that David was hiding on the hill of Hachilah. With three thousand men King Saul sought David, but upon reaching the hill they encamped beside the road. When David learned from his spies where King Saul pitched his tents, David and his men came when King Saul and his army were sleeping. Again, David stopped his men from killing King Saul, and simply asked them to take Saul's spear and the cup of water which were both at his head. Then they went away. Nobody noticed that David and his men had visited the camp, for a deep sleep had fallen upon them. (1 Sam 26:1-12)

When David got to the other side, and stood on the top of the hill afar off, he shouted to Abner, the commander of King Saul's army, saying, "Are you not a man, Abner? Why have you not watched your lord the king? For somebody had come to kill your king and you did not know it. You deserve death for this. Where now is the king's spear and the cup of water which was at his head?" When Saul realized, by the loss of his spear, how he could have been killed by David *for the second time*, he repented and said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life has been precious in your eyes this day. I have acted foolishly, and have been ignorant in very many things." David replied, "Behold the king's spear. Let one of the king's servants come over and fetch it." Then David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place. (1 Sam 26:13-25)

War broke out again between the Philistines and the Israelites. In the battle of Mount Gilboa three sons of Saul, including Jonathan, were slain. Saul himself was grievously wounded by the archers. He told his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and kill me, lest the enemies come and slay me, and mock me." But his armorbearer would not dare kill his own king. So, Saul took his sword, and fell upon it. Seeing this, his armorbearer also fell upon his sword and died with him. (1 Sam 31:1-5)

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<sup>157</sup> All Israel mourned at the death of Samuel (1 Sam 25: 1).





**Fig 2.6.7 Suicidal Death of King Saul**

When David heard the news of Saul and Jonathan's death, he and his men mourned and fasted for Saul and for Jonathan. Of Jonathan David said, "I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan, exceedingly beautiful and amiable to me above the love of women. As the mother loves her only son, so did I love you" (2 Sam 1:1-26).

## COMMENTARY

1. Samuel died toward the end of the *First Book of Samuel* (1 Sam 25:1). Therefore, the last chapters (Ch. 25-31) of the *First Book of Samuel* and the *Second Book of Samuel* could not have been written by Samuel himself. The book of *Judges*, *Ruth*, and most of the *First Book of Samuel* (up to Ch. 24), were probably written by Samuel. But the last chapters of the *First Book of Samuel* and the entire *Second Book of Samuel* were completed by the prophets Gad and Nathan (1 Chr 29:29).

## CHAPTER 7 THE STORY OF KING DAVID

(ca. 1010 B.C.)

### David as King

(2 Sam 2 - 9)

After King Saul's death, David and his men dwelt in Hebron, a city of Judah, where David espoused several women.<sup>158</sup> Soon the men of Judah made him king over Judah. Meanwhile Abner, the general of Saul's army, made Saul's son, Ishbaal, the king over Israel (2 Sam 2:1-10). For a while there was war between these two Jewish kingdoms. In the battle of Gibeon David's men defeated Ishbaal's soldiers. But, without David's knowledge, Joab and Abishai, who were David's nephews,<sup>159</sup> killed Abner (2 Sam 3:30). Soon Ishbaal, too, was killed by his own servants, and David punished the murderers (2 Sam 4).

Since the Israelites no longer had a king, and knowing that David was a just and righteous man and had no hatred for Saul nor for Ishbaal, the tribes of Israel and their elders came to David and made a league with him to be their king also. Therefore, David now became king of both Judah and Israel. After being hailed King of Judah and Israel, David moved his residence to Jerusalem. In Hebron he reigned over Judah for 7 years and 6 months, but in Jerusalem he reigned over both Judah and Israel for 33 years. (2 Sam 5:1-5)

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<sup>158</sup> The first wife of David was **Michal**, a daughter of King Saul (1 Sam 18:27). His second and third wives were **Abigail** of Carmel and **Ahinoam** of Jezreel (1 Sam 25:39-43). While in Hebron David also met and married his fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh wives, who were **Maacah**, **Haggith**, **Abital** and **Eglah** (2 Sam 3:2-5). His eighth wife was **Bathsheba** (2 Sam 11:3-5), who was the mother of the next king of Israel, King Solomon (1 Kgs 1:11). These were the wives of King David whose names were given in Holy Scripture. But King David also took other wives and a number of unknown concubines when he moved from Hebron to Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:13-16).

<sup>159</sup> Joab and Abishai were David's nephews, being sons of his sister Zeruiah (1 Chr 2:13-17).



*David was a brilliant king.* He allied himself with Hiram, the Phoenician king of Tyre, who sent carpenters to help him build his palace in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:11). He organized his army,<sup>160</sup> surrounded himself with loyal stewards and wise advisers (1 Chr 27:25-34), and often consulted God in prayer. By prayer he defeated the Philistines (2 Sam 5:17-25) and won for Israel many other victories. David defeated the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Amalekites and the Philistines.<sup>161</sup> (2 Sam 8)



**Fig 2.7.1 Statue of King David**

In the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Italy

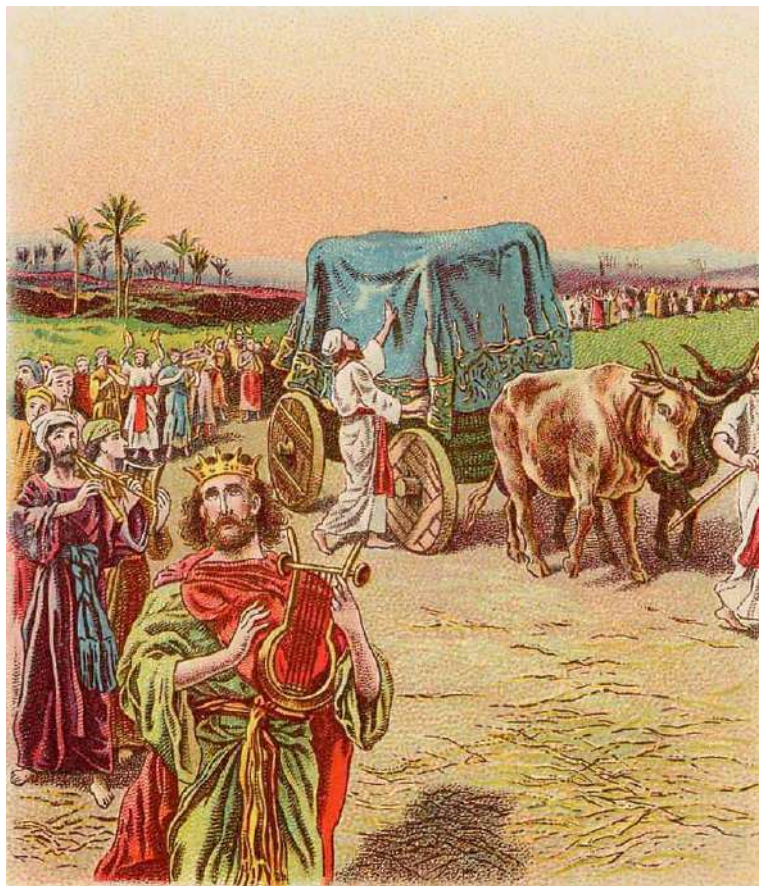
Sculptor: Nicolas Cordier (1567-1612)

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<sup>160</sup> David's army had 12 divisions of 24,000 soldiers each, which were from the 12 tribes of Israel. To each division he assigned a captain who served him every month (1 Chr 27:1). He made Joab the general of his army (1 Chr 27:34).

<sup>161</sup> By the time he died he had an empire that extended from Egypt to the Euphrates.

*David was also a pious king.* To give importance and honor to the Ark of the Covenant, he gathered chosen men to move the Ark from the house of Abinadab at Kiriath-jearim to a more appropriate location in Mount Zion, which was in Jerusalem. In transporting the Ark, they laid it upon a new cart pulled by oxen. All Israel played all kinds of musical instruments – harps, lutes, timbrels, cornets and cymbals, as they went on procession. But when they came to the grounds of Nachon, the oxen stumbled and caused the ark to lean aside. Uzzah, one of the sons of Abinadab, touched the Ark and took hold of it, but God struck him for his rashness and he died<sup>162</sup> (2 Sam 6:1-7).



**Fig 2.7.2 Uzzah Touches the Ark**

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<sup>162</sup> It was, indeed, forbidden to touch the Ark. But why would God slay Uzzah just for trying to prevent the Ark from tipping over? One possibility is that it was Uzzah's idea to transport the Ark by cart, which should not have been done in the first place. Moses prohibited transporting the Ark by cart. The Ark was supposed to be carried on their shoulders by poles that pass through the rings on the Ark's corners (Num 7:6-9). His touching the Ark and his disobedience to Moses' law could have been the reason for this severe punishment.

Because of this incident, and fearing God for having punished Uzzah so severely, David ordered the Ark to be transported, not to his city (Jerusalem), but to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. After three months, and seeing how the Lord had blessed Obed-edom because of the Ark, David took the Ark out of the house of Obed-edom into his city. When they that carried the Ark had gone six paces, David sacrificed an ox and a ram.<sup>163</sup> (2 Sam 6:9-13)

As they entered Jerusalem David, girded with a linen ephod,<sup>164</sup> danced with all his might before the Lord. Michal the daughter of Saul, looking out through a window, saw David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart. David brought the Ark and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle which he had pitched for it. After offering holocausts and peace offerings before the Lord, David returned to bless his palace. Michal came out to meet him and said, “How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself before the handmaids of his servants.”<sup>165</sup> David replied, “Before the Lord who chose me rather than your father, I will play and make myself even lower than that. I will be little in my eyes, but more glorious in the eyes of the handmaids of whom you speak.” (2 Sam 6:14-22)

*David was also a grateful king.* For, he was not satisfied at merely having moved the Ark from the house of Abinadab to a better place in Jerusalem. He also dreamed of building a temple for God. He told Nathan the prophet that it did not seem right that he, the king, was living in a palace, but God, who delivered Israel from its enemies, was dwelling in a tent. God

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<sup>163</sup> A ram is a male sheep.

<sup>164</sup> An *ephod* was an apron-like priestly vestment affixed upon the shoulders with stones, and is usually worn over an ankle-length robe.

<sup>165</sup> This sarcastic remark was an occasion for some Bible scholars to think that David danced half naked, wearing only an ephod around his loins. However, the Bible did not say that David danced with *only* an ephod on his body. The ephod was an external garment usually placed over a robe, so it was unlikely that David was half naked when he danced. Michal’s remark that David “uncovered himself before the handmaids of his servants” could mean that David uncovered himself *of his royal attire* and danced with only his priestly garment on.



was pleased with David's grateful heart, that He told David through Nathan the prophet: "When your days are ended and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your son after you, and I will establish his kingdom."<sup>166</sup> He shall build a temple to my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.<sup>167</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. If he commits any iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But I will not take away my mercy from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before my face..." (2 Sam 7:1-15)



**Fig 2.7.3 Nathan Prophecies to David**

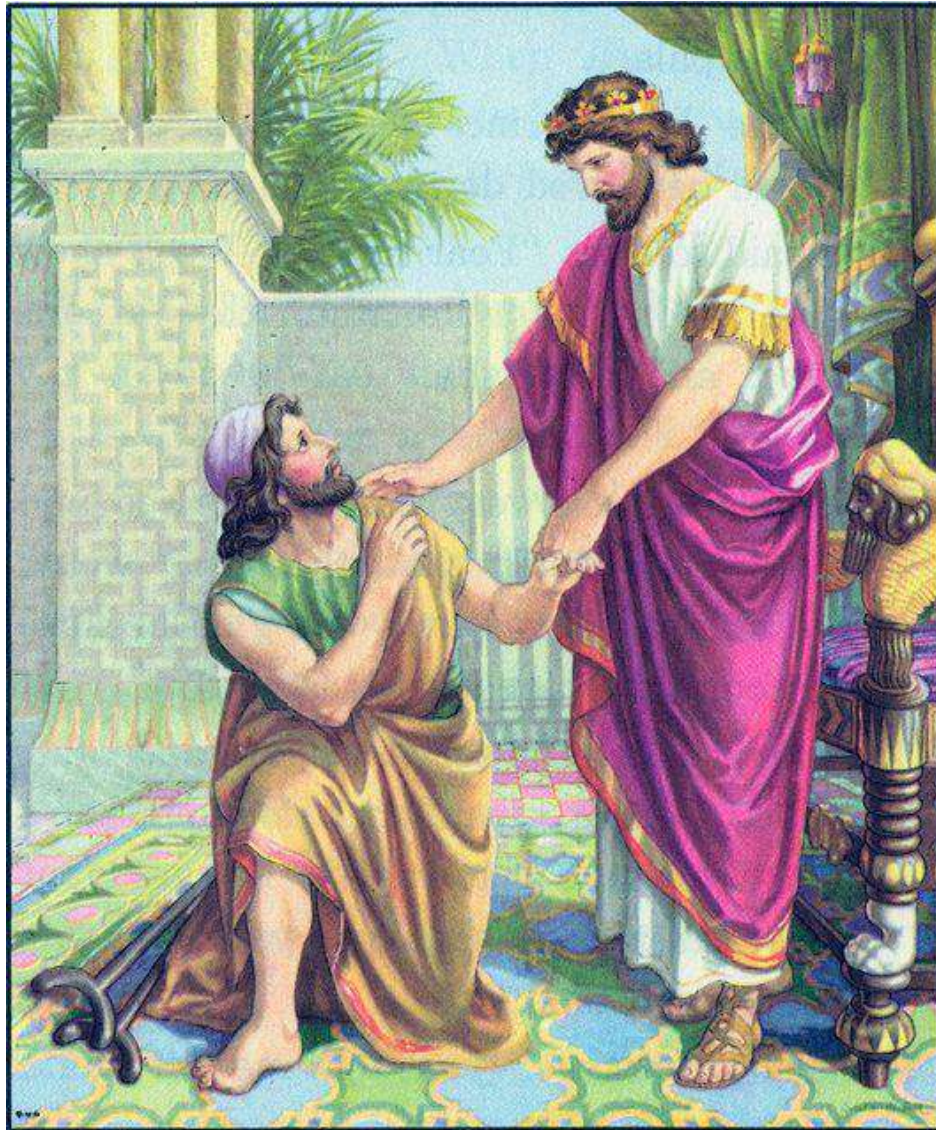
Artist unknown

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<sup>166</sup> This partly refers to King Solomon's kingdom, but more so to Christ's kingdom, the Church.

<sup>167</sup> Does this not remind us of the angel Gabriel's words to Mary? (Luke 1:32-33)

*David was also a kind and merciful king.* One day he asked, “Is there any one left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake? Ziba, one of Saul’s servants, reported, “There is a son of Jonathan left, who is lame on both feet.” David sent Ziba to fetch him. When Meribbaal, the son of Jonathan came, he fell on his face and gave respect. David told him, “Fear not, for I will show you mercy for your father’s sake. I will restore to you the lands of Saul, and you shall eat bread at my table always.” So, Meribbaal dwelt in Jerusalem and always ate at the king’s table (2 Sam 9).



**Fig 2.7.4 David Shows Mercy to Meribbaal**



## David as Psalmist and Prophet

(The *Book of Psalms*)

David, who was noted earlier for being a skillful harpist,<sup>168</sup> also composed many songs, called *psalms*, in praise of the Lord. It is possible that even as a shepherd boy, David used his harp and sang psalms to the Lord while pasturing his father's sheep. Psalm 23 especially reminds us of this:

*The Lord is my shepherd,  
There is nothing I shall want.  
He has set me in a place of pasture,  
And brought me up on refreshing waters...*

Today David's psalms, which were all written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are now put together in a book of the Bible known as the *Book of Psalms*. David's psalms are of four basic types: *liturgical psalms* (hymns of praise), *lamentations* (sorrow for sin), *thanksgiving* (for God's blessings), and *prayers for deliverance* (from evil and suffering). Many of them, originally composed for sanctuary worship, are still being used by the Church today at Holy Mass and at the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the prayer of the Church.

In his old age David assigned to the priests and Levites their respective duties. Among the Levites he chose four thousand singers to sing with various instruments hymns of praise to the Lord (1 Chr 23:5). These singers were to give thanks and sing praises to the Lord morning and evening (1 Chr 23:30), – during sabbaths, the new moons, and the rest of the solemnities, – *continually* before the Lord (1 Chr 23:31).

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<sup>168</sup> See 1 Sam 16:16-20.





**Fig 2.7.5 David, “the Excellent Psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam 23:1)**

Artist: Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656)

In addition to praising God, some of the psalms of King David also contained *prophecies* about the future Redeemer. These prophecies are:<sup>169</sup>

1. The Redeemer will be the Son of God, and He will be called Lord: *“The Lord said to me: You are my son, this day have I begotten You”* (Ps 2:7) ... *“The Lord said to my lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool”* (Ps 110:1).
2. The Redeemer will come from the family of David: *“The Lord has sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: Of the fruit of your womb, I will set upon your throne”* (Ps 132:11).
3. The Redeemer will be loved and honored by children: *“Out of the mouth of infants and of babes you have perfected praise”* (Ps 8:2).
4. The Redeemer will speak in parables: *“I will open my mouth in parables”* (Ps 78:2).
5. The Redeemer will be despised by His people, and betrayed by His friend: *“The stone which the builders rejected...”* (Ps 118:22). *“Even the man of peace, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has greatly supplanted me”* (Ps 41:9).
6. The Redeemer will be crucified, but no bone will be broken: *“They have dug my hands and feet”* (Ps 22:16) ... *“The Lord keeps all his bones, not one of them shall be broken”* (Ps 34:20).
7. The Redeemer’s body will not corrupt but rise from the dead: *“Because you will not leave my soul in hell,<sup>170</sup> nor will you give your holy one to see corruption”* (Ps 16:10). *“I have slept and taken my rest. And I have risen up, because the Lord has protected me”* (Ps 3:5).
8. The Redeemer will ascend into Heaven and sit at God’s right hand: *“You have ascended on high...”* (Ps 68:18). *“The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool”* (Ps 110:1).

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<sup>169</sup> The Psalm and verse numbers are based on the numbering used in modern Bibles, although the texts are from the *Douay-Rheims* Bible.

<sup>170</sup> This is the “hell of the just” (Hebrew *Sheol*), not the “hell of the damned” (*Gai Hinnom*, or *Gehenna* in Greek).



## David's Sin<sup>171</sup> and Repentance

(2 Sam 11-12)

There was a time when David sent the captain of his army, Joab, and his men to battle against the children of Ammon. They besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem. One afternoon David arose from his bed and walked upon the roof of his house. From the roof of his house, he saw a woman bathing, and she was very beautiful. He inquired who the woman was, and was told that the woman was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David sent messengers and invited her, then he slept with her. Bathsheba returned to her house, and when she realized that she was with child, she told David, "I have conceived." (2 Sam 11:1-5)



**Fig 2.7.6 Bathsheba in King David's Palace**  
Artist: Frank Bernard Dicksee (1853-1928)

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<sup>171</sup> Although David was a just and pious king, God permitted him to sin to make him realize that his success and greatness did not come from himself but from God.



To hide his adulterous act David wrote a letter to Joab and asked Uriah to deliver it to him. The letter said, “Assign Uriah in the front of the battle, where the fighting is strongest. Then leave him there that he may be wounded by the enemy and die.” Joab obeyed, and after Uriah the Hittite was killed, Joab sent and told David. (2 Sam 11:14-18) Bathsheba mourned for the loss of her husband. When her mourning was over, David sent and brought Bathsheba into his house to become his wife, and she bore him a son.<sup>172</sup> But what David had done was displeasing to the Lord.<sup>173</sup> (2 Sam 11:26-27)

The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan gave David a parable: “There were two men in one city. One was rich, and the other poor. The rich man had a large number of sheep and oxen. But the poor man had nothing at all but one little ewe lamb,<sup>174</sup> which he bought and fed, and which grew up in his house together with his children. It was unto him as a daughter. When a stranger came to the rich man, he spared his own sheep and oxen to make a feast for the stranger, and took the poor man’s ewe, and dressed it for his guest.” David’s anger was greatly kindled, and he said to Nathan: “As the Lord lives, the man that has done this shall die.” Nathan said to David, “You are the man. Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel and delivered you from the hand of Saul, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. Why then have you despised the word of the Lord to do evil in My sight? You killed Uriah the Hittite and have taken his wife to be your own. Behold I will raise up evil against you out of your own household,” which means that his punishments will come from his own children. (2 Sam 12:1-11)

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<sup>172</sup> This son was not Solomon, because this child died soon after birth, as punishment for David’s sin (2 Sam 12:13-18). Also, we know from 2 Sam 12:24 that Solomon was the name given to the *second* son of David and Bathsheba.

<sup>173</sup> David was guilty of adultery and murder. For, he had an affair with Bathsheba, who was Uriah’s wife. And, although he did not personally kill Uriah, by his command he was directly responsible for exposing him to danger, and leaving him helpless against the enemy.

<sup>174</sup> A *ewe* is a female sheep, just as a *ram* is a male sheep. A *lamb* is a young sheep.



**Fig 2.7.7 Nathan Rebukes David: “You Are the Man” (2 Sam 12:7)**

Artist: Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807)

David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan said to David, “The Lord has taken away your sin; you shall not die. Still, the child that is born to you shall surely die.”<sup>175</sup> David prayed to the Lord for the child. He fasted and laid upon the ground, but on the seventh day the child died. David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and she bore him another son. David called him Solomon,<sup>176</sup> and the Lord loved him. David placed him under the hand of Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 12:13-25).

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<sup>175</sup> This shows that even sins that have been repented and forgiven, are still punished. Likewise, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation the absolution given by the priest takes away the *guilt* of sin, but there remain temporal punishments which, if not removed on earth, the soul will still need to suffer in purgatory.

<sup>176</sup> The name *Solomon* means “amiable to the Lord” or “beloved of the Lord”.

## Absalom's Revolt

(2 Sam 14-19)

David's greatest chastisement was the rebellion of one of his own sons, Absalom. In all Israel there was not a man so beautiful as Absalom: from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him (2 Sam 14:25). But Absalom was ambitious and wanted to be king in place of his father. In the morning he rose up early and stood by the gate of the city. When any man who had a controversy with the king came, Absalom would tell him that he was right and the king was wrong. In this way he enticed the hearts of the men of Israel and gained many followers to rebel against their king (2 Sam 15:1-6).

When David found out that all Israel had followed Absalom's lead, he and his men left Jerusalem in order to spare the city from the hands of Absalom. Passing over the brook Kidron, they went barefooted with their heads covered, up the Mount of Olives, weeping on the way (2 Sam 15:13-30). A man from the house of Saul, named Shimei, met David and threw stones at him, cursing and calling him a man of blood. One of David's men, Abishai, wanted to cut off Shimei's head, but David stopped him saying, "Leave him alone. Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day" (2 Sam 16:5-12).

Absalom pursued his father beyond the Jordan. Before the battle began, David instructed his general and other officers: "Save me the boy Absalom," and all the people heard this (2 Sam 18:5). David and Absalom's armies met, and a battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. Absalom's army was defeated, and he fled on his mule. But Absalom's long hair got caught in the branches, so he remained hanging on the tree as the mule ran away. Against David's instructions, David's general, Joab, thrust three spears into Absalom's heart, and the ungrateful son died. (2 Sam 18:6-15)





**Fig 2.7.8 The Death of Absalom**

Artist: Corrado Giaquinto (1703-1766)

When David heard that Absalom was slain, he went up to the high chamber over the gate, and wept. As he went, he spoke saying, “My son Absalom, Absalom my son. Would to God that I might die for you, Absalom my son, my son Absalom” (2 Sam 18:33). Then David returned to Jerusalem, together with his army and the men of Judah who came forth to meet him. (2 Sam 19:15-40)

## The Last Days of King David

(1 Kgs 1-2:1-10; 1 Chr 28-29)

When David became old and was approaching the end of his life the people did not know who his successor would be. David had many wives and also had many sons, any one of whom could be appointed by him as the next king of Israel. David's firstborn son was Amnon (1 Chr 3:1-3), who was killed by Absalom because he raped Absalom's sister (2 Sam 13:1-29). The second son, Daniel – also known as Chileab (2 Sam 3:3) – probably died in his infancy because nothing else is said about him in the Bible. The third son was the rebel Absalom, who was killed by Joab in the forest of Ephraim. The fourth surviving son was Adonijah, whom everyone might expect to be the next king of Israel. In fact, Adonijah exalted himself, saying: "I will be king." Then he made himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. Having killed rams and calves, and all fat cattle, Adonijah invited all his brethren, all the men of Judah to celebrate with him. But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, nor Solomon. (1 Kgs 1:1-10)

Nathan said to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon: "Have you not heard that Adonijah now reigns, and our lord David knows it not?" So, Bathsheba went in to David's chamber, bowed to him and said, "My lord, you swore to your handmaid, by the Lord your God, saying: 'Solomon, your son, shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.' Behold, Adonijah now reigns, and you, my lord the king, know nothing of it...Now, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you, that you should tell them who shall sit on your throne after you."<sup>177</sup> Now Nathan also entered the room and confirmed Bathsheba's report regarding Adonijah. King David said to Bathsheba, "Solomon your son shall reign after me" (1 Kgs 1:11-30).

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<sup>177</sup> David's promise to Bathsheba is nowhere else mentioned in the previous books of the Bible, so David probably made this private promise to Bathsheba when he tried to comfort her on the occasion of their first son's death (2 Sam 12:24).





**Fig 2.7.9 Bathsheba Reminds David of His Promise to Make Solomon the Next King<sup>178</sup>**

Artist: Frederick Goodall (1822-1904)

By David's instruction Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet therefore went and anointed Solomon king. When Adonijah and his guests heard the news that Solomon had been appointed king, they all became afraid of him and every man went his way. Fearing Solomon, Adonijah took hold of the horn of the altar and said, "Let king Solomon swear to me this day, that he will not kill his servant with the sword." They reported this to Solomon and Solomon said, "If he be a good man, there shall not so much as one hair of his head fall to the ground. But if evil be found in him, he shall die" (1 Kgs 1:31-52).

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<sup>178</sup> Bathsheba bowed down before the old King David to remind him of his promise. In the picture the man standing at the back was Nathan the prophet, and the beautiful young woman behind King David was Abishag the Shunammite, David's nurse and concubine (1 Kgs 1:1-4).



Before he passed away, David gathered all the chief men of Israel, the princes of the tribes and the captains of the companies, and told them of his plan to build a temple for the Lord. “Hear me, my brothers and my people,” he said, “I had a thought to build a house in which the ark of the Lord, and the footstool of our God might rest.” But, as he was a man of war and had shed blood,<sup>179</sup> David revealed to them that God had forbidden him to build the temple himself, but allowed his son Solomon to build it (1Chr 28:1-8).

David then said to Solomon, “You, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart... If you seek him, you shall find him. But if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. Now, therefore, seeing the Lord has chosen you to build the house of the sanctuary, take courage and do it.” Then he gave Solomon instructions as to how he wanted the temple to be built. He even gave Solomon the gold and silver needed for the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar of incense (1 Chr 28:9-18).

David said to the princes and the people: “The work is great, because the house is not built for man but for God.” He then set an example and gave his gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and precious stones so that the temple might be built. Then he encouraged the people and said, “If any man is willing to offer, let him fill his hand today, and offer what he can joyfully give to the Lord.” Then the heads of the families, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands, and of hundreds, and the overseers of the king’s possessions, promised and joyfully contributed their resources for the house of the Lord. David blessed the Lord. (1 Chr 29:1-10).

David died and was buried in the “city of David” (1 Kgs 2:10), which was identically Mount Zion in Jerusalem (1 Chr 11:4-7).

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<sup>179</sup> Probably referring to the murder of Uriah the Hittite, the former husband of Bathsheba.

## COMMENTARY

1. The historicity of King David was at one time disputed because for years archaeologists could not find any record of him outside the Bible. In 1993, however, a basalt inscription from a broken fragment, known as the Tel Dan Stele, was found in Israel, which dates back to the eighth century B.C. The inscription commemorates the victory of a Syrian king over two other neighboring kings – the king of Israel and the king of the “house of David,” which is the kingdom of Judah. The evidence is significant because it mentions not merely the name of David, but also the “house of David,” suggesting a kingdom. Although not explicitly named in the stele, the Syrian king was probably King Hazael (2 Kgs 8:24-28), who won over Joram, (the king of Israel) and Ahaziah, (son and successor of the king of Judah, whose name was also Joram). See *The Tel Dan Inscription*



**Fig 2.7.10 Tel Dan Stele at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem**

2. In many respects David was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he was born in Bethlehem, as Christ was born in Bethlehem. During his youth David led a hidden life, just as our Lord did. David defeated Goliath with a humble weapon (the sling), as Christ defeated Satan with the humble Cross. David was persecuted by Saul, whom he did not fight, but saved. Christ, too, was persecuted by His enemies, whom He never fought but prayed for. David joyfully entered the city of Jerusalem to bring the Ark to Mount Zion; Christ entered Jerusalem triumphantly so that He might bring Himself to Mount Calvary.



## CHAPTER 8 THE STORY OF KING SOLOMON

(ca. 970 B.C.)

### The Wisdom of King Solomon

(1 Kgs 2:11 – 4:34)

Solomon began his reign after David died. Adonijah, who once tried to reign in Israel, went to Bathsheba, the mother of King Solomon, and said to her, “You know that the kingdom was mine... but the kingdom has become my brother’s, for it was appointed to him by the Lord. Now, therefore, I request that you speak to King Solomon (for he cannot deny you anything) to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.” Bathsheba answered, “Well, I will speak for you to the king.” Bathsheba went to King Solomon to tell him Adonijah’s request. Solomon arose to meet her, bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne. A throne was also set for his mother, and she sat on his right hand.<sup>180</sup> Bathsheba then asked Solomon to give Abishag to Adonijah, his brother, to wife. But Solomon quickly detected Adonijah’s crafty plot to reclaim the kingdom,<sup>181</sup> so he answered, “Why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? You might as well ask me the kingdom for him.” Then he ordered Adonijah and Joab, who conspired with him, to be put to death. (1 Kgs 2:11-34).

In the beginning Solomon loved God and walked in the precepts of David. One night the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: “Ask what you will that I should give you” (1 Kgs 3:5).

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<sup>180</sup> Notice how highly King Solomon honored Bathsheba, his mother and Queen. Unlike the practice in other countries, the queen in Israel was usually not the wife of the king, but his mother. This avoided the difficulty of having too many queens in the kingdom when the king had many wives. The Queen Mother, also known as the *Gebirah*, was an important person in the royal court, and often participated in the affairs of the king (as in 2 Kgs 24:12, 15).

<sup>181</sup> In Israel taking possession of the king’s concubines was equivalent to having a right to the throne. In fact, Absalom did the same thing when he rebelled against David and tried to get the kingdom from him (See 2 Sam 16:21-22).

Solomon answered, “Lord, you made me king...and I am but a child... Give therefore your servant an understanding heart, to judge your people, and to discern between good and evil.” The Lord said to Solomon, “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life nor riches, nor the lives of your enemies, but have asked for yourself **wisdom** to discern judgment, behold I have done for you according to your words, and have given you a wise and understanding heart, so much that there has been no one like you before, nor shall there arise one after you” (1 Kgs 3:11-12).

Solomon’s wisdom was soon demonstrated when two women came and asked him to resolve their quarrel. (1 Kgs 3:16)



**Fig 2.8.1 The Judgment of King Solomon**

Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

One of them said, “I beg you, my lord, I and this woman lived in one house, and I gave birth to a child with her in the room. The third day after I gave birth, she also gave birth; and we were together. No other person was with us in the house; just the two of us. Now this woman’s child died in the night, for in her sleep she overlaid him. Rising in the dead time of the night, she took my child from my side while I, your handmaid, was asleep, and laid it next to her while she laid her dead child next to me. (1 Kgs 3:17-20)

“When I arose in the morning to nurse my child, behold it was dead. On closer examination, when it was clear day, I found that the child was not the one which I bore.” The other woman answered, “It is not so as you say. Your child is dead, and mine is alive.” “On the contrary,” the woman said, “you lie, for my child lives and your child is dead.” In this manner they disputed before the king. (1 Kgs 3:21-22)

Then King Solomon said, “Bring me a sword.” When they had brought a sword before him, he said: “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” But the woman, whose child was alive, said to the king (for her heart was moved for her child): “I beg you, my lord, give her the child alive, and do not kill it.” But the other said, “Let the child be neither mine nor yours, but divide it.” (1 Kgs 3:24-26)

The king answered, “Give the living child to this woman, and let it not be killed, for she is the true mother” (1 Kgs 3:27). All in Israel heard about this, and they feared the king, seeing that the wisdom of God was in him. Indeed, “God gave to Solomon exceedingly great wisdom and understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand of the seashore. The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the Orientals and of the Egyptians. He was wiser than all men ... and was renowned in all nations round about... Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, and his poems were a thousand and five.” (1 Kgs 4:29-32)



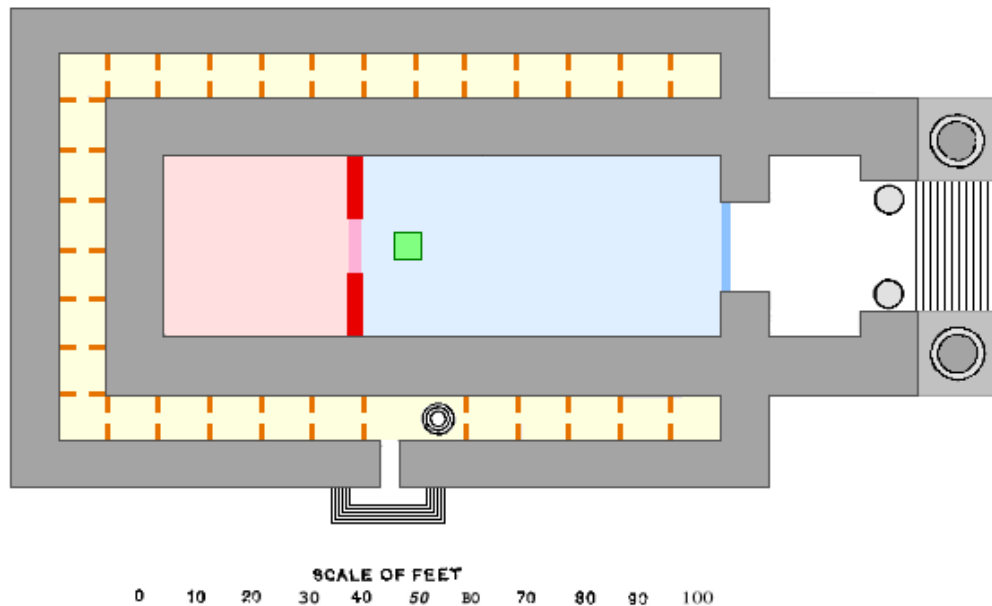
## The Building and Dedication of the Temple

(1 Kgs 5:1 – 9:9; 2 Chr 7)



**Fig 2.8.2 The Temple of Solomon**

A digital rendition by Johnreve



**Fig 2.8.3 Floor Plan of Temple (courtyard and appurtenances not shown)**

Pink = Holy of Holies (contains the Ark); Blue = Sanctuary; White = Porch

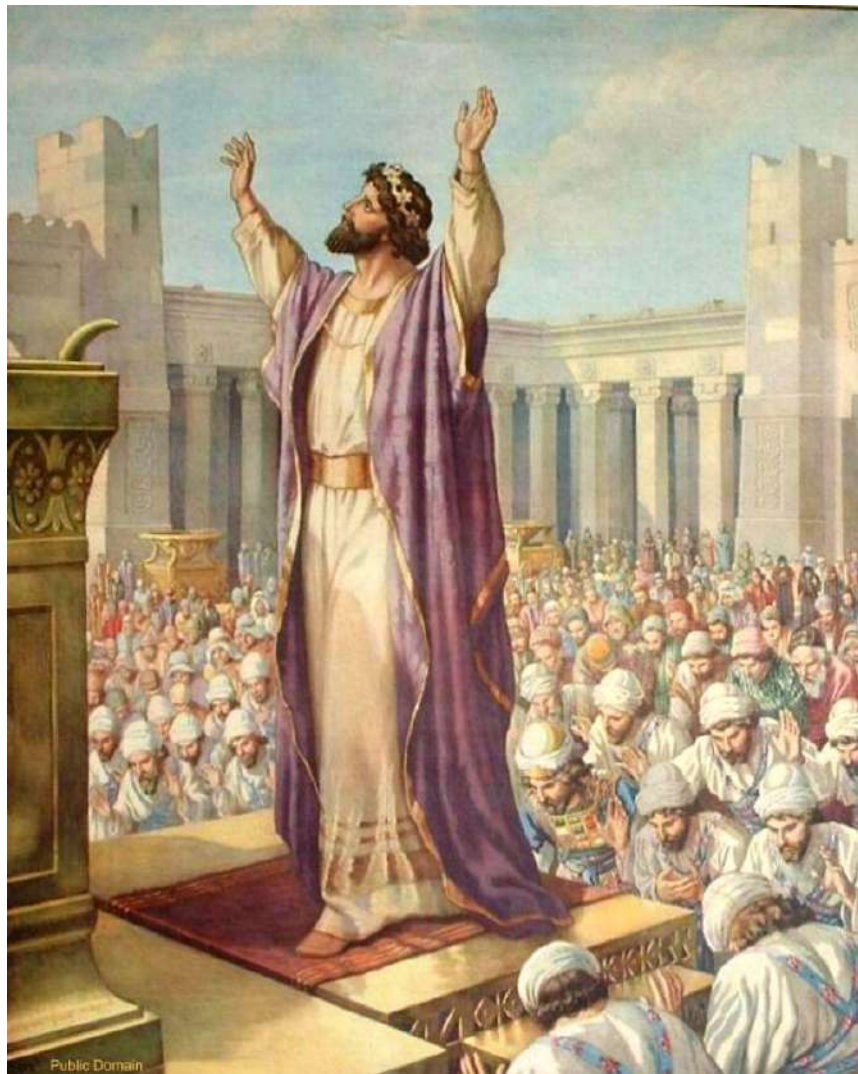
Green = Table of Showbread; Pale Orange = Storage/Administrative areas

Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent his skilled workers to help Solomon build his temple, for he was a friend of King David. He also gave Solomon all the cedar trees and fir trees from Lebanon that he needed to furnish the wood for the temple. In turn Solomon paid wages to Hiram's servants and also gave Hiram wheat and oil. Solomon had seventy thousand men that brought the materials, and eighty thousand more that cut and dressed the stones in the mountain. In addition, there were three thousand three hundred overseers who took charge of the workers. The masons of Solomon and of Hiram worked together to set the stone foundations of the new temple. (1 Kgs 5)

The construction of the temple began during the fourth year of the reign of King Solomon. The temple itself (not including the front porch) was not unusually big, being only sixty cubits (90 ft) long, twenty cubits (30 ft) wide, and thirty cubits (45 ft) high. But it was built of the finest materials and by the best workmanship. The foundation and the structure were made of precisely cut stones. The stone walls were covered with cedar wood, so that no stone could be seen in the wall at all. The doors, which were made from fir trees, and the cedar wood which covered the stone walls, were lavishly ornamented with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and various images. Everything in the temple, the wooden walls and even the floors, were overlaid with the purest gold. (1 Kgs 6)

Solomon also built a palace for himself and other structures around the temple. But the masterpiece was the temple, which had the same general layout as the tabernacle. There were two parts to the building – the Holy of Holies and the Sanctuary. The east end of the temple was the porch with two huge bronze pillars on each side. The courtyard contained the Altar of Holocausts and the bronze Laver (sometimes called the “molten sea”) which rests on twelve bronze oxen. The Laver was used for ceremonial washings, but there were also ten smaller ones which were movable. (1 Kgs 7; 2 Chr 4)

The Holy of Holies was the new location where the Ark would be placed. Inside the Holy of Holies were two figures of cherubim with outstretched wings to guard the Ark (1 Kgs 6:27). These cherubim were made of wood from olive trees, but were also overlaid with gold. After seven years the temple was finished (1 Kgs 6:38). All the children of Israel gathered with King Solomon to place the Ark and dedicate the temple. The priests placed the Ark containing the two tables of stone that Moses received from God at Mount Horeb, under the wings of the cherubim. When the priests came out of the sanctuary, a cloud filled the temple, indicating that God had now occupied the temple. (1 Kgs 8:1-10)



**Fig 2.8.4 Solomon Dedicates the Temple**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



All of Israel went with King Solomon before the Ark, and they sacrificed sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered (1 Kgs 8:5). Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the sight of the assembly, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, saying: “Lord God of Israel, there is no God like You, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath...If heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built? But have regard to the prayer of Your servant... Hear the hymn and the prayer which Your servant prays before You this day, that Your eyes may be open upon this house night and day...that You may listen to the prayer which Your servant prays in this place to You. May You listen to the prayers of Your servant, and of Your people Israel, whatsoever they ask for in this place, and show them mercy.” (1 Kgs 8:22-30)

When Solomon finished his long prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the holocausts and the victims.<sup>182</sup> Seeing the fire coming down from heaven, and the majesty of the Lord filling the temple, the Israelites bowed down with their faces to the ground, upon the stone pavement. They adored and praised the Lord because He is good and His mercy endures forever. (2 Chr 7:1-3)

Once more God appeared to Solomon at night and said, “I have heard your prayer, and have chosen and sanctified this place, that My name may be there forever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually. *And as for you, if you walk before Me, as David your father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you, ... I will raise up the throne of your kingdom, and there shall not fail you a man from your descendants to rule Israel. But if you turn away and forsake my justices, ... and you go and serve strange gods and adore them, I will pluck you up by the root out of my land...*” (2 Chr 7:12-20)

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<sup>182</sup> This indicates God’s acceptance of their offerings and sacrifices.

## COMMENTARY

1. The site of King Solomon's temple cannot be excavated at present because it stands close to the Muslim holy place, the Dome of the Rock. Unfortunately, this means that no direct evidence for King Solomon's temple would be available anytime soon. However, excavations at other contemporary temple sites in Syria and Palestine had given indirect, extra-biblical support to the trustworthiness of the biblical narratives. For example, the Ain Dara temple in Syria, which was in use from 1300 to 740 B.C., shows a remarkable similarity with the biblical description of King Solomon's temple. This indicates that the design or architecture of Solomon's temple as described in the Bible was not the invention of later biblical writers, but was the "state of the art" in temple construction during that time.
2. The same can be said about the embellishments and use of gold in King Solomon's temple. Many critics find it hard to believe that a temple in tenth century Jerusalem could be so richly ornamented as described in Holy Scripture (1 Kgs 6:14-38). But archaeological studies show that this was exactly how temples were decorated in antiquity, not just in Palestine, but even in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. Inscriptions and other physical evidences from 1550 B.C. in Egypt to 540 B.C. in Babylon show the propensity of ancient peoples to embellish their temples, palaces and important monuments with extensive coverings of art and gold.
3. The Bible clearly said that King Solomon obtained his gold (a) from friends who gave them to him as gifts, (b) from trading, or (c) from conquests. The idea that Solomon had his own gold mine was proposed, and the speculation was augmented by Sir Rider Haggard's novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, which was published in 1885. However, there is no hard evidence yet that King Solomon, rich as he was in gold and other metals, ever engaged in the mining industry – gold, silver or copper.

## The Magnificent Reign of King Solomon

(1 Kgs 9:10-10:29; 2 Chr 9:1-30)

The reign of King Solomon was characterized by peace and prosperity. Unlike King David who spent his resources fighting wars, King Solomon spent his wealth building his empire. For David had already defeated all the enemies of his kingdom. King Solomon had control of all the territories west of the Euphrates, and he had peace on all sides around him. (1 Kgs 4:24-25)

King Solomon was a wise ruler. He did not antagonize foreign leaders, but made friends with them (2 Chr 9:23). He even married the princesses of other lands and received precious gifts from their kings.<sup>183</sup> King Solomon was also a builder. He did not merely build a temple for God and an opulent palace for himself, but he also built various towns and store cities, such as Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Beth-horon, Baalath and Tamar. He strengthened his army and fortified his towns with defensive walls, such as the Millo<sup>184</sup> and the wall of Jerusalem. (1 Kgs 9:15-19)

Solomon also built a navy docked on the shore of the Red Sea in the land of Edom (1 Kgs 9:26). With the help of King Hiram's experienced sailors, Solomon's fleet would sail once every three years to Tarshish and the land of Ophir, and would bring back shipments of gold and silver, ivory, apes and peacocks (1 Kgs 9:26-28; 2 Chr 8:18, 9:21). His gold inventory was stunning, and his wealth was unsurpassed by the wealth of any other king (1 Kgs 10:23). He had 40,000 horses and 12,000 chariots and horsemen, which he placed in the cities of chariots.<sup>185</sup> (1 Kgs 4:26; 2 Chr 9:25)

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<sup>183</sup> For example, the city of Gezer, which he rebuilt, was a gift from the Pharaoh of Egypt when Solomon married his daughter (1 Kgs 9:16).

<sup>184</sup> The Millo was another rampart or defensive wall that protected the city of Jerusalem (2 Chr 32:5).

<sup>185</sup> One of the so-called "cities of chariots" was Megiddo, where archaeologists found a large, paved stable with single stalls for 450 horses and sheds for 150 chariots.



King Solomon's wisdom was renowned the world over. Even the queen of Sheba came to visit him, to test his wisdom and to see for herself the grandeur of Solomon's kingdom. She entered Jerusalem with a great train of camels and servants carrying spices, gold and precious stones for Solomon. Then she asked him all the questions she had in her heart, and there was none that Solomon could not answer. (1 Kgs 10:1-3)



**Fig 2.8.5 Visit of the Queen of Sheba**

Artist: Giovanni Demin (1789-1859)

When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, the palace that he built, the food on his table, and the apartments of his servants, she told Solomon, "I did not believe them that told me of your works and your wisdom until I came. Now I see that your wisdom and your works exceed the fame which I had heard" (1 Kgs 10:7). Then Solomon gave her more gifts than she brought him, and she went back to her home country. (2 Chr 9:12)

## The End of King Solomon

(1 Kgs 11-12:24; 2 Chr 10)

Solomon did not end his reign well, for in his old age he failed to remain faithful to his covenant with God. He was allured by the beauty of many young, pagan women from other nations whom he married. Altogether he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kgs 11:3). Yielding to his impure desires, he was led by these women to worship their false gods, and even to build temples for their idols. (1 Kgs 11:7)



**Fig 2.8.6 King Solomon Worships an Idol**

Artist: Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669)

God was displeased with Solomon's ingratitude, so He told him that as punishment for his sins, his kingdom would be divided. "Yet," God said, "for the sake of David your father, I will not divide it in your days but I will divide it out of the hand of your son." (1 Kgs 11:11-12)



Solomon reigned for forty years (1 Kgs 11:42). Even before he died, God had already started raising adversaries to Solomon. One of them was a valiant man named **Jeroboam**. One day Jeroboam met a prophet, named Ahijah, who was wearing a new garment. Ahijah took his new garment and tore it in twelve pieces. He told Jeroboam to take ten of the pieces because God was going to take ten of the twelve tribes of Israel from Solomon's son and give them to him. When Solomon heard this, he tried to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam fled into Egypt and lived with King Shishak<sup>186</sup> of Egypt until Solomon died. (1 Kgs 11:28-42).

Solomon's son, **Rehoboam**, became king when Solomon died. The Israelites called Jeroboam to return from Egypt since Solomon had already died. Then with him they spoke to Rehoboam and said that if he would lighten the burden imposed on them by his father, then they would continue to serve him; otherwise, they would not. Rehoboam consulted the old advisers of Solomon to tell him what to do, and they told him to lighten the people's burden. But Rehoboam, listening to the advice of younger men, refused to lighten their burden and said to the people: "If my father put a heavy yoke upon you, yet will I make your yoke even heavier. If my father beat you with whips, I will beat you with scorpions." The people got angry with Rehoboam for treating them so harshly, so the tribes of Israel returned to their homes. Ten tribes rebelled and chose to make Jeroboam their king, thus fulfilling Ahijah's prophecy. Only the tribe of Judah (intermixed with the small tribe of Benjamin) kept Rehoboam as their king. Rehoboam gathered together the tribe of Judah and the small tribe of Benjamin to make war with the tribes of Jeroboam, but God spoke to Rehoboam through the prophet Shemaiah who said: "You shall not fight against your brothers, the children of Israel, for this thing is from me." Rehoboam and his army listened to the Lord and went back to their homes. (1 Kgs 12:1-24)

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<sup>186</sup> The Egyptian king, known as King Sheshonq I in Egyptian records, was probably the same person as King Shishak mentioned in the Bible.



Thus, the original kingdom of the sons of Jacob was divided into two. The northern kingdom, called the *Kingdom of Israel*, was ruled by King Jeroboam, and had its capital in Samaria. The southern kingdom, called the *Kingdom of Judah*, continued to be held by King Rehoboam, and had its capital in Jerusalem.



**Fig 2.8.7 The Divided Kingdom**

## COMMENTARY

1. The practice of having more than one wife and intermarrying with people of other faiths, was against God's law, but King Solomon did it anyway to satisfy his worldly ambitions and to gain the favor of other kings and rulers. But 700 wives! Was that possible? It is incredible, but when one sees this, not as a purely animal goal to satisfy sexual desire, but as a political strategy to promote good will with neighboring territories, Solomon's many wives become easier to believe.
2. God loved Solomon (2 Sam 12:25). In spite of God's love and His gift of wisdom, Solomon died a shameful death. Like Samson's passion, which brought weakness to Samson's strength, Solomon's fascination for young women clouded his better judgment, and brought folly to his later actions. This illustrates that God's love and His gifts are not enough to save a man, but that man must also reciprocate God's love and persevere in virtue to preserve the saving power of His gifts.
3. The rebellion of the ten tribes against their lawful king, Rehoboam, was sinful, and it prefigures the schisms that later would also divide the Catholic Church.
4. One might wonder what happened to the treasures and gold of King Solomon. The Bible says that the Egyptian King Shishak (also known in Egyptian history as King Sheshonq I) plundered Jerusalem in 925 B.C. during the reign of King Solomon's son, Rehoboam. King Shishak took away the treasures of King Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 14:25-26). Then Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, also took away the remainder of these treasures when he besieged Jerusalem in 598 and 587 B.C. (2 Kgs 24:12-13).
5. For many years King Shishak was known only to readers of the Bible, and was unknown to many secular historians. However, recent excavations in Thebes, Egypt, revealed inscriptions at the south exterior walls of the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, which narrate King Shishak's military campaigns and successes. Due to these inscriptions historians have learned more about King Shishak, and nobody denies his historicity anymore.

# **My Free Bible History: The Old Testament**

## *Part Three From the Division of the Kingdom to the Birth of Christ*



## CHAPTER 1 THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL (930 – 722 B.C.)

### Jeroboam and the Kings of Israel

After Solomon's death, the northern tribes chose Jeroboam to be their king, and their kingdom became known as the *Kingdom of Israel*. Jeroboam thought that if his ten tribes were to offer sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem, then they would soon leave him and return to Rehoboam, the king of Judah. So, he made two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and told his subjects not to go to Jerusalem anymore, but to offer sacrifices in their own temples. He showed them the golden calves that he had made, and he himself worshipped at the altar in Bethel. (1 Kgs 12:26-33)



**Fig 3.1.1 Jeroboam's Idolatry**

Artist: Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806)

Many people obeyed Jeroboam and the kingdom fell into idolatry. There had not been much peace in the Kingdom of Israel ever since. King Rehoboam of Judah and his successors waged war continually with Jeroboam and his successors, causing misery among the people of both kingdoms. The following is a list of the kings who reigned in the *Kingdom of Israel* (or the northern kingdom) from 930 – 722 B.C.

Name	Term (B.C.)	Notes	Reference
<b>Jeroboam I</b>	930 - 910	Practiced Idolatry; made two golden calves	1 Kgs 12:16-14:20
<b>Nadab</b>	910 - 909	Son of Jeroboam I	1 Kgs 15:25-31
<b>Baasha</b>	909 - 884	Overthrew Nadab	1 Kgs 15:33-16:7
<b>Elah</b>	886 - 885	Son of Baasha	1 Kgs 16:8-14
<b>Zimri</b>	885	Overthrew Elah; reigned only seven days	1 Kgs 16:15-20
<b>Omri</b>	885 - 874	Overthrew Zimri	1 Kgs 16:21-28
<b>Ahab</b>	874 - 853	Son of Omri; husband of Jezebel; worshipped Baal; rebuked and warned by the prophet <b>Elijah</b> .	1 Kgs 16:29-22:40
<b>Ahaziah</b>	853 - 852	Son of Ahab	1 Kgs 22:51-2 Kgs 1:18
<b>Jehoram</b>	852 - 841	Son of Ahab. As successor of Elijah, the prophet <b>Elisha</b> began preaching and performing miracles.	2 Kgs 3:1-9:26
<b>Jehu</b>	841 - 814	Overthrew Jehoram; ordered Jezebel to be cast out of the window; destroyed the whole house of Ahab	2 Kgs 9:29-10:36
<b>Jehoahaz</b>	814 - 798	Son of Jehu	2 Kgs 13:1-9
<b>Jehoash</b>	798 - 783	Son of Jehoahaz. <b>Jonah</b> the prophet was called to preach in Nineveh.	2 Kgs 13:10-14:15
<b>Jeroboam II</b>	783 - 743	Son of Jehoash. The prophets <b>Amos</b> and <b>Hosea</b> predicted doom for the Kingdom of Israel.	2 Kgs 14:23-29
<b>Zechariah</b>	743	Son of Jeroboam II; reigned six months	2 Kgs 15:8-12
<b>Shallum</b>	743	Overthrew Zechariah; reigned one month	2 Kgs 15:13-15
<b>Menahem</b>	743 - 738	Overthrew Shallum	2 Kgs 15:16-22
<b>Pekahiah</b>	738 - 737	Son of Menahem	2 Kgs 15:23-26
<b>Pekah</b>	737 - 732	Overthrew Pekahiah	2 Kgs 15:27-31
<b>Hoshea</b>	732 - 724	Overthrew Pekahiah; attacked by Shalmaneser V of Assyria when he discontinued paying tribute to Assyria.	2 Kgs 17:1-6

The kings and the people of the northern kingdom abandoned the religion of their fathers. They married pagan wives and began to practice various forms of idolatry. During this time God had sent them holy and enlightened men, called *Prophets*, – such as Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea – to call them to repentance. The *Book of Jonah* narrates that God also sent the prophet Jonah to preach repentance to the pagans in Nineveh (in Assyria). The pagans repented and Nineveh was spared from God’s wrath. But the Jews in Israel continued their wicked ways. As punishment for their sins, God allowed them to be conquered by a foreign power. In 721 B.C. King Shalmaneser V of Assyria attacked the Kingdom of Israel and laid siege to its capital, Samaria. Shalmaneser died before he could capture Samaria, but his brother Sargon II continued the siege and in 722 B.C. took the Jews as captives into Assyria (2 Kgs 17:1-18). An episode of this captivity was written in the *Book of Tobit*, but nothing else was heard of these Jews afterwards. They had since disappeared from history as the “lost” tribes of Israel. Some Assyrians moved to Israel (2 Kgs 17:24) and intermarried with the few remaining Jews in northern Palestine, which became the *Samaritans* – a people of mixed blood, culture and religion.

## The Prophet Elijah

(1 Kgs 16:29 – 22:1-38)

The prophet Elijah preached during the time of the wicked King Ahab and his pagan wife, Jezebel (See chart above). Ahab was worse than many of the kings before him. He built a temple in Samaria for Jezebel’s god, Baal, and he himself worshipped this idol (1 Kgs 16:30-33). Because of this, Elijah said to Ahab: “As long as the Lord God lives, He will send neither dew nor rain these coming years, except by my word.” Then God told Elijah to hide from Ahab by the brook Cherith. “There you shall drink from the brook,” God said, “and by my command the ravens shall feed you.” (1 Kgs 17:1-4)





**Fig 3.1.2 The Ravens Feed Elijah**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Elijah went as he was told, and dwelt by the brook Cherith, which was over against the Jordan. The ravens did come and brought him bread and meat every morning and every evening, and he drank from the waters of the brook Cherith. (1 Kgs 17:5-6)

After some time, the brook dried up for lack of rain. Then the Lord came to Elijah and said to him, “Arise, and go to Zarephath. I have commanded a widow there to feed you.”<sup>187</sup> When he came to the gate of the city, Elijah saw the widow gathering sticks. He called her and said, “Give me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And bring me also a morsel of bread.” The widow answered, “I have no bread, but only a handful of meal in a pot and a little oil in a pitcher. I am gathering sticks wherewith to cook it for myself and my son, after which we shall die.”<sup>188</sup> Elijah asked her to make him also a cake out of the meal and oil, and assured her that God would not allow her meal to be used up, nor her oil to be diminished, until the rain would fall again upon the face of the earth. She went and did as Elijah said. And there was enough food for them from that day. (1 Kgs 17:7-16)

Sometime later the widow’s son fell sick, and the sickness was so grievous that he died. The woman said to Elijah, “What have I done to you, you man of God? Did you come here that my sins should be remembered, and that my son should be killed?” Elijah took the boy from her bosom and laid him upon his own bed. Then he cried to the Lord and said, “O Lord, my God, have you afflicted the widow by whom I was fed by killing her son? I beg you, let the soul of this child return into his body.” The Lord heard Elijah’s prayer and revived the boy. Elijah took the child and gave him back to the woman, saying, “Behold your son lives.” Then the woman said, “Now I know that you are a man of God.” (1 Kgs 17:17-24)

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<sup>187</sup> The lack of rain also brought famine in the land. Food was difficult to find, which was the reason why God sent Elijah to Zarephath, where a widow would feed him.

<sup>188</sup> She said that she and her son would die because that was the last of the food they had.





**Fig 3.1.3 Elijah by His Prayer Revives the Widow's Son**

Artist: Louis Hersent (1777-1860)



In the third year of the famine, God told Elijah to show himself before King Ahab that He might again give rain upon the face of the earth. When Ahab met Elijah, he asked, “Are you he that caused this trouble in Israel?” Elijah answered, “It is not I that caused this drought and this famine in Israel but you, for you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed Baal. Nevertheless, gather all the people of Israel unto Mount Carmel, and also the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal.” (1 Kgs 18:17-19)

Ahab, the people and all the prophets of Baal gathered at Mount Carmel. Elijah came to the crowd and said, “If my Lord be God, follow Him. But if Baal, then follow him. I am the only prophet of my Lord, but there are four hundred fifty prophets of Baal. Let two oxen be given us, and let them choose one and I will choose the other. Let them kill their ox, cut it in pieces, and lay it upon wood, but put no fire under it. I will do the same for my ox, lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of my Lord. He that shall answer with fire on the wood is the true God.” All the people agreed and said that it was a very good proposal. (1 Kgs 18:20-24)

The prophets of Baal prepared their ox and placed it on the wood of their altar. From morning till noon, they prayed, “O Baal, hear us.” They even cut themselves up with knives until they were all covered with blood. All the time they kept praying, and praying louder, but there was no answer. No fire appeared on their wood. Elijah said to the people, “Now come to me.” He poured water over the ox and wood, and prayed: “O Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, show this day that You are the God of Israel, and I, Your servant, have done all these things according to Your command.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned the holocaust, the wood and the stones on the altar. Seeing this, the people fell on their faces saying, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.” After this Elijah ordered all the prophets of Baal to be killed, and rain fell abundantly. (1 Kgs 18:25-45)



**Fig 3.1.4 God Answers Elijah's Prayer with Fire**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done, and how Elijah ordered all the prophets of Baal to be killed. Jezebel sought to take Elijah's life, but he fled to the wilderness of Beersheba. When he was there, he sat under a Juniper tree and prayed, "It is enough for me, Lord. Take away my soul, for I am no better than my fathers." Then he fell asleep in the shadow of the juniper tree. Behold, an angel of the Lord touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for you have yet a long way to go." (1 Kgs 19:1-7)



**Fig 3.1.5 An Angel Wakes up Elijah**

Artist: Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680)



Elijah arose, ate and drank. And for forty days and forty nights he walked in the strength of that food until he reached Mount Horeb, the mount of God. In the mountain God told him to return to Israel by way of Damascus, where he was to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, Jehu as king over Israel, and **Elisha** as his successor. Elijah did what he was told, and after meeting him, Elisha followed Elijah and ministered to him. (1 Kgs 19:8-21)

Now in Jezreel there was a man, named Naboth, who had a vineyard near Ahab's palace. Ahab offered to buy his vineyard, but Naboth refused to sell it. When his wife, Jezebel, heard this, she wrote letters in Ahab's name to the ancients and chief men of the city to bring forth two false witnesses against Naboth and accuse him of blaspheming God and the king. The men of the city believed the witnesses, brought Naboth outside the city and stoned him to death. When Ahab heard that Naboth was already dead, he went down to the vineyard to take possession of it. But by God's command Elijah confronted Ahab and told him that because he had done this wicked thing, he and Jezebel would be punished, saying, "In this place where the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick your blood also. And they shall eat Jezebel in the field of Jezreel." (1 Kgs 21:1-23)

These prophecies were fulfilled. For, three years later Ahab was fatally wounded in a war against Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and his blood ran out of his wound into the bottom of the chariot. When the people washed his chariot in the pool of Samaria after his death, the dogs came and licked up his blood, thus fulfilling the first part of Elijah's prophecy and ending the wicked reign of King Ahab. (1 Kgs 22:1-38)

The second part of Elijah's prophecy, which pertained to Jezebel's death, was fulfilled during the time of King Jehu. As Jehu was entering Jezreel on his return from battle, he saw a woman looking out her window. When he found out that the woman was Jezebel, he ordered three servants to

throw her out of the window. Jezebel was thrown out of the window and her body was trod upon by the horses at Jehu's procession. (2 Kgs 9:30-33)



**Fig 3.1.6 The Death of Jezebel**

Artist: William Brassey Hole (1846-1917)

A few hours later Jehu said to the servants, “Go and look after that cursed woman, and bury her, because she is a king’s daughter.” When the servants came to take her body, they discovered that the dogs had already eaten her. (2 Kgs 9:34-37)

## COMMENTARY

1. The drought and famine that happened in Israel during the early part of Elijah's career were a figure of the spiritual hunger suffered by our sinful world before the coming of Christ. As the heavens poured rain on earth after Elijah's holocaust, so the fountains of God's grace were opened to repentant sinners after Christ made His sacrifice on the cross. In many ways Elijah was also a type or figure of our Lord. He raised to life the son of the widow of Zarephath, as Christ raised to life the son of the widow of Naim (Luke 7:11-15). He multiplied the meal and oil, as Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes (Matt 14:13-21). He was encouraged by an angel to continue his mission, as Christ was strengthened by an angel to accomplish our redemption (Luke 22:43).
2. Elijah's prophecy about King Ahab was this: "*In this place* where the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick your blood also." Now, the biblical narrative said that Naboth was stoned outside of Jezreel, probably just outside the city. But Ahab's blood was licked by the dogs in Samaria, which was about 20 miles away. Is there an error here? There is certainly a difficulty, but not necessarily an error. Oftentimes a difficulty in Holy Scripture occurs when the sacred writer omits certain details in the narrative, and the interpreter has to speculate what detail was omitted that would resolve the difficulty. In this particular case, although Naboth was stoned to death just outside Jezreel, the Bible did not say that his dead body remained there. His corpse was probably brought to Samaria, the capital of Ahab's kingdom, for verification purposes, and it was in Samaria that his blood was licked by the dogs.



### 3. Map for the story of Elijah and Elisha



Fig 3.1.7 Map for the Story of Elijah and Elisha

## The Prophet Elisha

(2 Kgs 2 - 12)

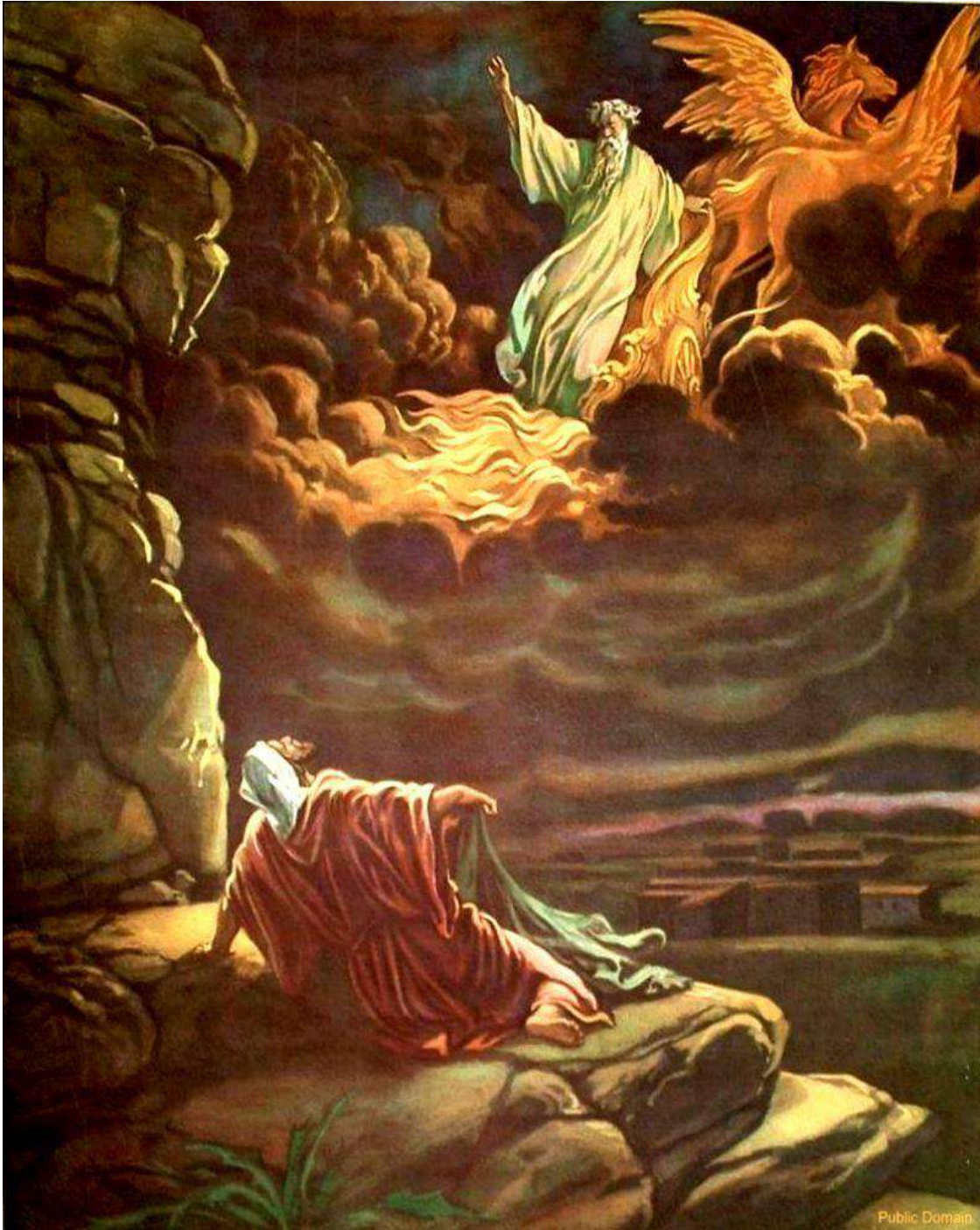
During the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel,<sup>189</sup> Elijah told Elisha to stay behind, for he was going to Bethel. But Elisha said to him, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” When they had come down to Bethel, the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel said to Elisha: “Do you know that this day the Lord will take away your master from you?” Elisha answered, “I know it, too, but hold your peace.” Then Elijah told Elisha, “Stay here, because the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” Elisha answered, “As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” When they came to Jericho, the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho also came to Elisha and said to him: “Do you know that this day the Lord will take away your master from you?” Elisha answered, “I know it, too, but hold your peace.” Elisha kept following Elijah wherever he went, until they reached and stood by the Jordan river. Now fifty men, who were sons of the prophets, also followed and watched them from a distance. When they reached the Jordan river, Elijah took his coat, folded it together, and struck the waters. The waters were divided, so that he and Elisha were able to walk over dry ground. When they have crossed the river, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what you will have me do for you before I be taken away from you.” Elisha responded, “I beg you, that in me may be your double spirit.”<sup>190</sup> Elijah then said to him, “You have asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, you shall have what you have asked; but if you see me not, you shall not have it.” Then, as they were walking and talking together, a fiery chariot and fiery horses separated the two of them, and a whirlwind took Elijah up into heaven. Elisha saw him and cried, “My father, my father” (2 Kgs 2:1-12).

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<sup>189</sup> Note that there was also another Jehoram, king of Judah, who at the same time was reigning in Jerusalem.

<sup>190</sup> Elisha was asking that he might be like another Elijah, or that Elijah’s spirit might remain in him.





**Fig 3.1.8 Elijah Taken up by a Whirlwind into Heaven in a Chariot of Fire<sup>191</sup>**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953), after Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

<sup>191</sup> The “heaven” that Elijah was taken up into was not the dwelling place of God, which was closed to all men until the Ascension of Christ. It simply refers to some undetermined place that is not visible to the naked eye. Possibly, Elijah was transported to the land of Judah because, when Jehoram, king of Judah, killed his brothers with the sword, he received a letter from Elijah (2 Chr 21:4-14).



Elisha did not see Elijah anymore after that, but he took Elijah's coat that fell when he was carried away in the fiery chariot. In going back, Elisha stood on the bank of the river Jordan and struck the waters with Elijah's coat. But the waters were not divided. He said, "Where now is the God of Elijah?" He struck the waters again. This time the waters were divided, so that Elisha was able to pass over. Seeing this, the people said: "Now the spirit of Elijah has rested upon Elisha" (2 Kgs 2:13-15).

Elisha performed many miracles after this. One day Elisha went to Shunem, where a woman offered him bread to eat. As he often passed that way to eat, she said to her husband, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who often pass by us. Let us, therefore, make him a little room, put a little bed in it for him, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick, so that when he comes to us, he may abide there." One day Elisha came again and rested in that room. He then asked Gehazi, his servant, to call the Shunammite woman and find out what they could do for her in return. Gehazi said, "Do not ask. She has no son, and her husband is old." Elisha then called the woman and told her that she would have a son. The woman answered, "I beg you, man of God, do not lie to your handmaid." The woman conceived, and brought forth a son. The child grew. One day he went out to his father in the field and complained, "My head aches, my head aches." His father told his servant to take the boy and carry him to his mother. When he had brought him to his mother, she sat him on her knees until noon, and then he died. She laid him upon Elisha's bed, shut the door, called her husband and said that she was going to the man of God (Elisha) and come again. She hurriedly went to mount Carmel on a donkey. When Elisha saw her coming, he told Gehazi to meet her and ask, "Is all well with you, and with your husband, and with your son?" When she came to Elisha, she caught hold on his feet, and Gehazi came to remove her. Elisha told him, "Leave her alone for her soul is in anguish." She then said to him, "Did I not say: Do not deceive me?" (2 Kgs 4:8-28)

Elisha told Gehazi to take his staff and lay it upon the face of the child. “If any man meet you,” Elisha said, “salute him not. And if any man salute you, answer him not.” Gehazi took Elisha’s staff and left right away. Elisha and the woman soon followed. When Gehazi laid the staff upon the face of the child, nothing happened. He therefore went to meet Elisha and said, “The child is not risen.” (2 Kgs 4:29-31)

Elisha went into the house, and behold the child lay dead on his bed. Going in, Elisha shut the door and prayed to the Lord. Soon the child opened his eyes. He called Gehazi and said to him, “Call the Shunammite woman.” She went in to him and he said, “Take up your son.” (2 Kgs 4:32-37)



**Fig 3.1.9 Elisha Restores the Shunammite Woman's Son**

Artist: Benjamin West (1738-1820)

Elisha performed many more miracles after this, then he died and was buried. But a miracle also happened after his death. One day some people, who were at the graveyard to bury a man, encountered a band of robbers that came from Moab. Frightened, they simply laid the dead body into the grave of Elisha. As soon as the corpse had touched the bones of Elisha, the man came to life and stood upon his feet! (2 Kgs 13:20-21).

## COMMENTARY

1. In seeing Elisha, the woman said, “Did I not say, Do not deceive me?” because she felt that she was lied to, or deceived. She thought that it would have been better for her not have become a mother, than to be so soon deprived of her child. But it was not Elisha’s fault, nor God’s fault. God sometimes wills physical evil indirectly, that is, for the sake of a greater good. In this case God willed the death of the child, not as an evil event, nor to cause sadness, but to manifest His power by a miracle. For, by the child having died, and then restored to life, God had given the woman greater joy, greater love for her son, and greater faith in Elisha.
2. Elisha advised Gehazi to go straight to the woman’s house, and not to be interrupted by strangers. “If any man meet you, salute him not. If any man salute you, answer him not.” This applies as well to those who aim to restore the spiritual life of sinners. They ought not to be distracted by the salutations and ceremonies of the world, nor by any concern for the reward of their labor. Pope St. Gregory the Great, a Doctor of the Church, gives the same advice to pastors and preachers: “Every man who salutes by the way salutes as an incident in his journey and not from concern for the health of the person saluted. In like manner the man who preaches the Gospel not for love of heaven, but for the sake of a recompense, salutes so to speak by the way, because he desires the salvation of his hearers incidentally, and not of set purpose.” Pope St. Gregory the Great, *A Homily on the Pastoral Office* (A.D. 591), Tr. by Rev. Patrick Boyle, (NY Benziger Brothers, 1908), #5, p. 6
3. The interesting episode that happened in the graveyard shows that even in Old Testament times, God would sometimes perform miracles by the relics of His saints.



## Jonah, the Runaway Prophet

(The Book of Jonah)

One day God spoke to Jonah and asked him to go to Nineveh and preach penance there, for Nineveh had become a mighty, but wicked city.<sup>192</sup> Jonah rose up and went instead to Joppa and boarded a ship going to Tarshish.<sup>193</sup> (Jon 1:1-3)

The Lord sent a great storm, and the ship was in danger of being wrecked. The sailors were afraid, so they threw some of the goods they had on the ship into the sea to lighten the load. They also cast lots to find out who might have been responsible for bringing them this misfortune. The lot fell upon Jonah, for he had previously told them that he boarded the ship to run away from the mission that God assigned to him. Jonah told them, “Take me up and cast me into the sea, and the sea shall be calm to you.” They therefore took Jonah and cast him into the sea. The storm stopped and the water ceased raging. (Jon 1:4-15)

The Lord made a great fish<sup>194</sup> come, and it swallowed up Jonah. He was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. He prayed to God with confidence, saying, “I cried out of my affliction to the Lord, and He heard me. I cried out of the belly of hell, and You have heard my voice. You have cast me forth into the deep, ... I went to the lowest parts of the mountains... and You will bring up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God... I will pay whatsoever I have vowed for my salvation to the Lord.” By God’s command the fish vomited Jonah out on dry land. (Jon 2:1-11)

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<sup>192</sup> Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, a region of Mesopotamia that once comprised modern-day Iraq, Syria and part of Turkey.

<sup>193</sup> Many scholars believe that Tarshish was in southern Spain, which means that Jonah went in the opposite direction!

<sup>194</sup> Many people believe that the fish was a whale, but the Bible did not really say that it was a whale. The Bible merely said that it was a “great fish.”



**Fig 3.1.10 The Great Fish Vomits Jonah out on Dry Land**

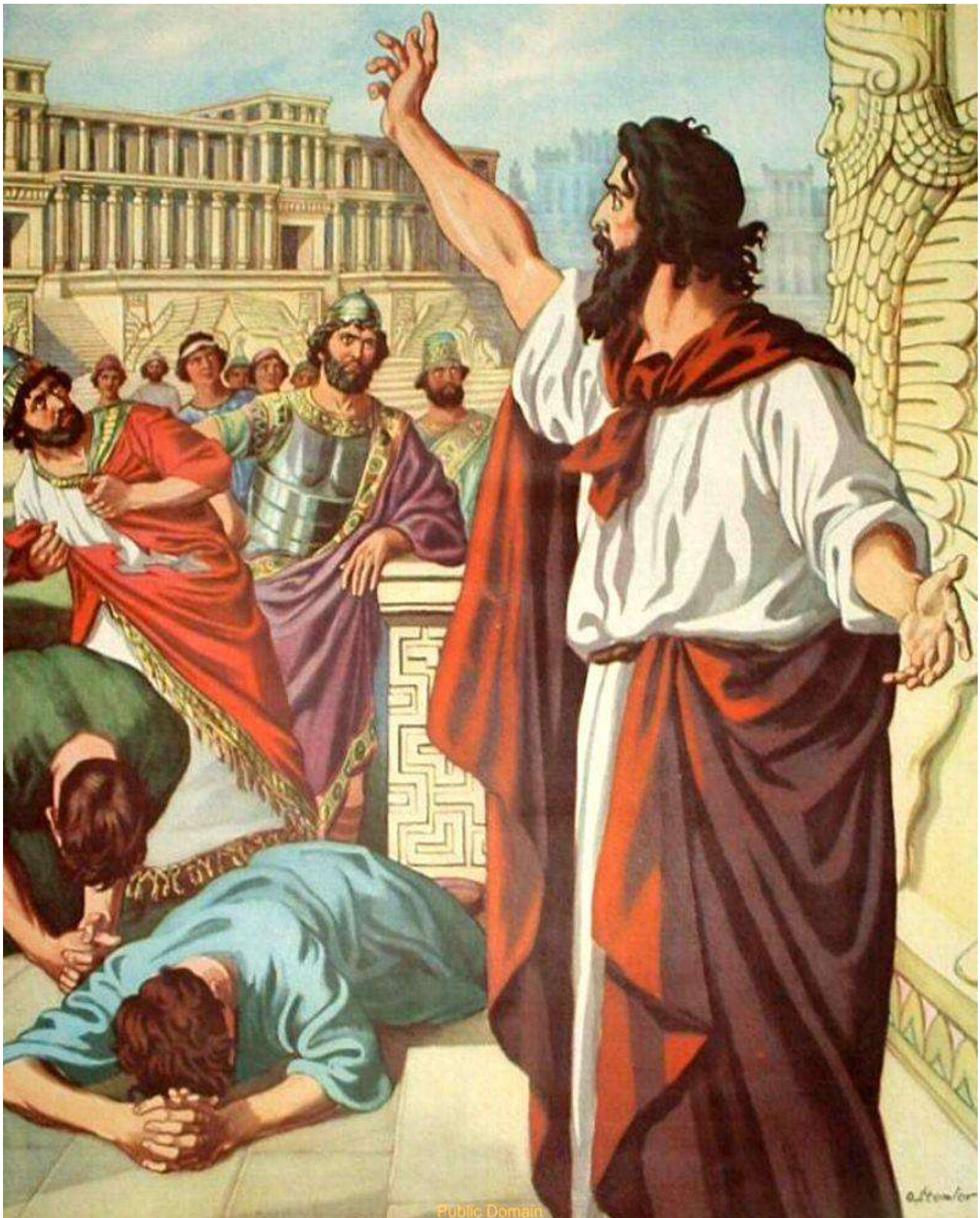
Artist: Pieter Lastman (1583-1633)

Again, God told Jonah to go and preach in Nineveh, which would take about three days to cover the entire city. Upon entering the city, he cried, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.” When the people of Nineveh heard this, they repented of their sins and fasted. Even the king of Nineveh proclaimed that everyone, including the animals, should fast and have nothing to eat or drink, and be covered with sackcloth.<sup>195</sup> “Let all men cry to the Lord,” the king said, “and let them abandon their iniquity.” God saw their repentance, so He mercifully spared the city. (Jon 3:1-10).

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<sup>195</sup> Sackcloth is a garment made from a very coarse, rough fabric, and is usually worn by penitents as a sign of sorrow for sins committed.





**Fig 3.1.11 Jonah Preaches in Nineveh**  
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)



Jonah was angry because God did not destroy the city.<sup>196</sup> He prayed and said to the Lord, “Is this not what I said when I was yet in my own country? I fled into Tarshish because I knew you were a gracious and merciful God, patient, of much compassion and easy to forgive evil.”<sup>197</sup> But the Lord said to Jonah, “Do you think you have reason to be angry?” (Jon 4:1-4)

Jonah built a hut outside the city and waited there to see what would befall the city. God made an ivy to grow and shelter Jonah from the hot sun, and this made Jonah glad. But God also allowed the ivy to be struck by a worm, so that it withered the next morning. When the sun was risen, a burning wind and the hot sun beat upon Jonah’s head so bad that he said, “Now it is better for me to die than to live.” Then God said to him, “Do you think you have reason to be angry? You regret losing the ivy, which you did not cause to grow. Shall I not spare Nineveh, which has over a hundred twenty thousand people, that do not know how to distinguish between their right hand and their left,<sup>198</sup> and many animals?” (Jon 4:5-11)

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<sup>196</sup> We can only speculate about why Jonah became angry when God did not destroy Nineveh. Some scholars thought that Jonah became angry because he feared that people would think that he was just a scare monger or a false prophet, since nothing actually happened to the city. Others thought that Jonah secretly wanted Nineveh to be destroyed, because the Ninevites were enemies of Israel.

<sup>197</sup> In other words, Jonah confessed that he fled to Tarshish because he was afraid that, since God was so merciful, then the Ninevites would repent and not be destroyed if he were to preach penance to them.”

<sup>198</sup> The people “that do not know how to distinguish between their right hand and their left” refer to children and infants.

## COMMENTARY

1. Although the story of Jonah and the “great fish” might sound mythical, Jonah was a real prophet who lived during the time of King Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C.). In fact, his name was mentioned in 2 Kgs 14:25. Also, our Lord Jesus did not merely compare the three days that He stayed in the grave with the three days that Jonah was in the belly of the fish (Matt 12:40), but He also confirmed that the people of Nineveh did penance at the preaching of Jonah (Matt 12:41).
2. The idea that the story of Jonah was fictional rather than factual comes from those who view supernatural events as impossible. But, if we accept that Almighty God can perform miracles, then the story of Jonah remaining alive in the belly of a fish, is as credible as the parting of the waters of the Red Sea. And, even if Jonah eventually died in the belly of the fish, God could also raise him from the dead when the fish vomited him out on dry land. With God everything is possible.

## Amos and Hosea

(The Book of Amos and the Book of Hosea)

**Amos** – “the prophet of God’s justice” – preached in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. He delivered a message of gloom at a time when the Kingdom of Israel was experiencing great wealth and prosperity. For it was wealth gained unjustly by oppressing the poor (Am 2:6-8). Amos therefore preached for social justice and predicted that for its sins *Israel would be carried away captive out of their land* (Am 7:11). This prediction was fulfilled when Sargon II, king of Assyria, deported the Ten Tribes of Israel into Assyria (2 Kgs 17:1-6).



Fig 3.1.12 The Prophet Amos

Amos was not only a prophet of doom. He also foretold that in Jerusalem *the tabernacle of David would be restored* (Am 9:11), a prophecy that gave consolation and hope to the Jews during their captivity in Babylon. The prophecy was fulfilled when the temple of Jerusalem, totally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C., was rebuilt and rededicated in 516 B.C.



**Hosea** – “the prophet of God’s loving-kindness” – also preached in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. The *Book of Hosea* contains not merely his prophecies, but the story of his married life. By God’s command he married a harlot, and his book shows how he, with sorrow and long-suffering, accepted his unfaithful wife (Hos 1:1-3). In another instance God commanded him again to marry an adulteress, which he did (Hos 3:1-3). Hosea first marrying a harlot and then a public sinner was a figure of God’s loving kindness in accepting and forgiving His unfaithful people (Israel), or His unfaithful bride, the Church.<sup>199</sup>



**Fig 3.1.13 The Prophet Hosea**

It was also Hosea who prophesied that *the Messiah would take refuge in Egypt*<sup>200</sup> (Hos 11:1).

<sup>199</sup> The representation of the relation of God to His people as a marriage bond was also expanded into a detailed allegory in another book of the Old Testament, called *The Song of Songs*.

<sup>200</sup> “*Out of Egypt I called my son*” (Hosea 11:1). This prophecy was fulfilled when the Holy Family went into Egypt to escape the persecution of King Herod the Great, who ordered the massacre of the innocents (Matt 2:13-15).

## **Tobit and His Son, Tobias** (*The Book of Tobit*)

While Nineveh did penance and found grace with God, the kingdom of Israel – in spite of the work of the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea – continued in its wicked and idolatrous ways. To punish the kings and people of Israel for their sins, God permitted that Israel's capital, Samaria, be attacked by Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria. After the death of Shalmaneser, his brother, Sargon II, continued the siege, and in 722 B.C. the kingdom of Israel fell and its inhabitants carried as captives to the cities of the Medes at the northeastern end of the Assyrian Empire. (2 Kgs 17:1-6)

Tobit was one of the Israelites who was taken as a captive in the Medes. He was a God-fearing man who did not forsake the way of truth even in his captivity. Every day he gave all he could to help his fellow captives. As an Israelite he never adored the golden calves that Jeroboam had made, but worshiped only the Lord God of Israel. As an exile he fed the hungry, gave clothes to the naked, and buried the bodies of those whom King Sennacherib, the son and successor of King Shalmaneser, had slain. Sennacherib heard of the goodness of Tobit and plotted to kill him, but Tobit fled away with his wife and his son. After forty-five days, Sennacherib was killed by his own sons, and Tobit and his family returned to their house. (Tob 1:1-25)

Tobit continued his works of mercy. One day, being wearied with burying the dead, he laid down by a wall and slept. As he was sleeping, the dirt from a swallow's nest fell upon his eyes, and caused him to lose his sight. This blindness prevented him from working and making a living, thus forcing his wife Anna, to go out every day to weave, in order to support him. One day she received a baby goat as a gift and brought it home. When Tobit heard the baby goat making a faint cry, he feared that it was stolen, and Anna rebuked him. (Tob 2:10-23)



**Fig 3.1.14 Tobit and Anna with a Baby Goat**

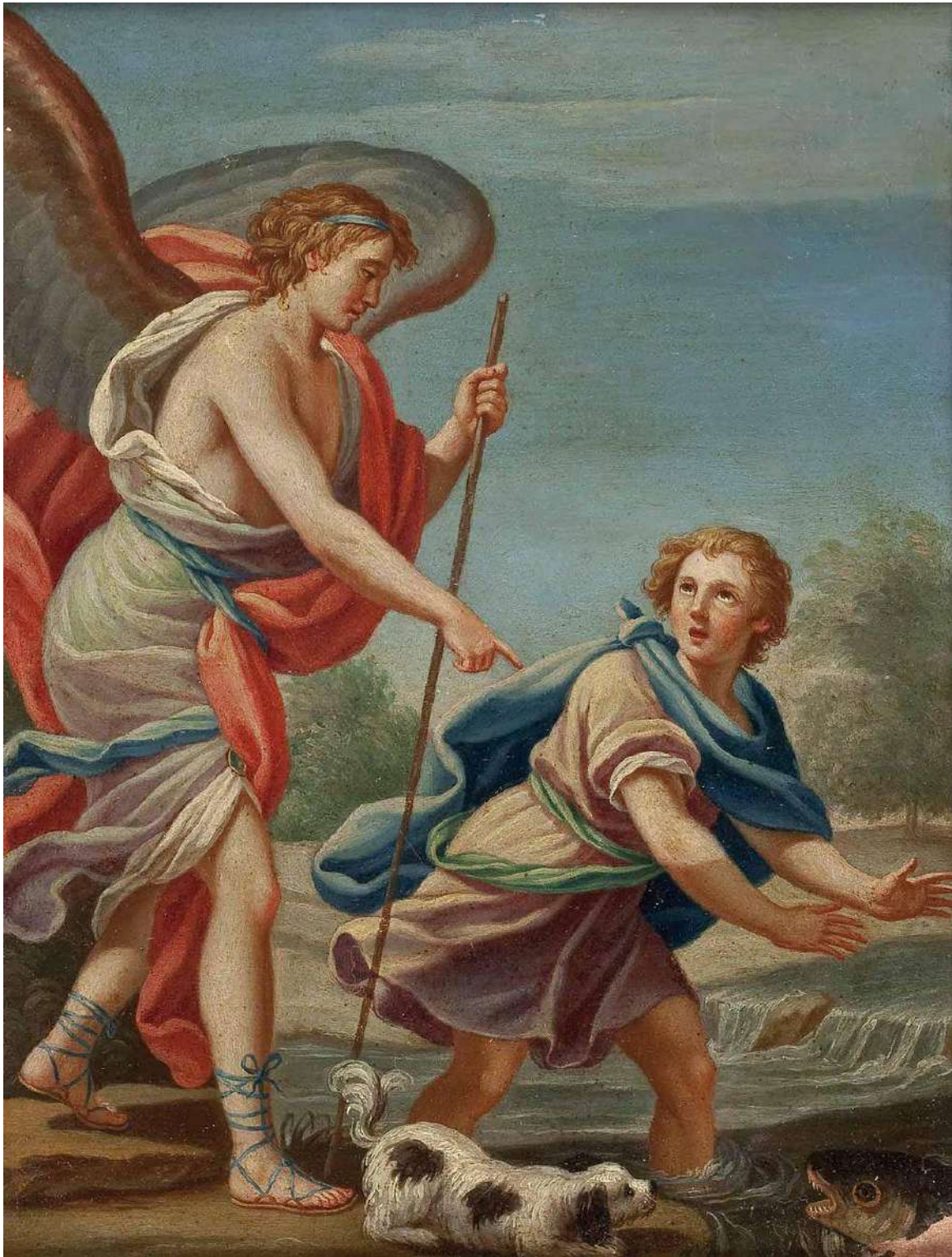
Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn (1606-1669)



Tobit sighed and began to pray with tears, saying, “Thou art just, O Lord, and all Thy judgments are just, and all Thy ways mercy, and truth, and judgment... Do with me according to Thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace, for it is better for me to die, than to live” (Tob 3:1-6) Then, when he thought that his prayer was heard and that he might die, he called his son, Tobias, and said to him: “When I die, bury my body. Honor your mother all the days of her life. And when she dies, bury her by my side. Always have God in your mind and never sin... According to your ability be merciful. If you have much, give abundantly. If you have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little... Seek counsel always of a wise man. Bless God at all times and desire of Him to direct your ways.” (Tob 4:1-20)

In his poverty, Tobit sent his son, Tobias, to collect debt from a man named Gabael, who lived in Rages, a city of the Medes. “Find someone to go with you, and I will pay him,” Tobit told him. Going forth, Tobias found a good-looking young man, who was ready to travel, but he did not know that the man was an angel. Tobias asked the stranger if he knew the way to Rages. “I know it,” the stranger said. Tobias spoke of him to his father, who then hired him to accompany his son. The angel told Tobit, “I will lead your son safely, and bring him back to you safely.” (Tob 4:20-5:20)

Tobias went forward, and the dog followed him. They came to lodge the first night by the Tigris River. When Tobias went out to wash his feet, behold a large fish came up to devour him. The angel told Tobias to seize the fish by the gill and draw it upon the land. Tobias did so. Then the angel said, “Cut the fish and take its heart, gall and liver, for these are useful medicines.” Tobias did so. He saved the heart, the gall and liver to be used later for medicine. Then he roasted the fish and they ate. They salted the rest of the fish and took it with them. (Tob 6:1-6)



**Fig 3.1.15 Tobias and the Angel**  
By an unknown 18<sup>th</sup> century artist

As they came close to a certain village Tobias asked the angel where they should lodge next. The angel answering said, “Here there is a man whose name is Raguel, a close relative of yours, and who has a daughter named Sarah. He has no other son or daughter; so, you, as next of kin, have a right to her and her inheritance. Ask her father, and he will give her to you to be your wife.” But Tobias hesitated and said, “I heard that she has had seven husbands, and they were all killed by a devil. I am afraid the same thing would happen to me.” The angel told him that Sarah’s previous husbands had shut God out from themselves and from their minds, and had given themselves to lust, which was why the devil prevailed over them. The angel therefore instructed Tobias to marry her, but keep himself continent from her for three days, and to give himself only to prayers with her. “Then on that night,” the angel continued, “lay the liver of the fish on the fire, and the devil shall be driven away.” (Tob 6:10-19)

Tobias followed the angel’s instructions, married Sarah and lived with his father-in-law for two weeks. He sent the angel to Rages to collect the debt from Gabael. The angel therefore went to Rages, collected the payment from Gabael, and invited him to attend the wedding feast. (Tob 7:1- 9:12)

Meanwhile, Tobit and his wife, Anna, had been solicitous for their son’s long delay. For, Raguel had been persuading Tobias to stay and not return to his father’s house. But seeing that Tobias could not be persuaded any longer, Raguel finally permitted Tobias and Sarah to leave. He gave Tobias half of all his possessions in men and maidservants, in cattle, camels, oxen, and much money. (Tob 10:1-10)

After travelling some distance, the angel suggested to Tobias that they go ahead, and let Sarah, her men and maidservants and the beasts, follow after them. Then the angel said to Tobias, “Take the gall of the fish with you, for it will be necessary.” (Tob 11:1-4)



Watching from the top of a hill, Anna saw them coming while they were still afar off. The angel said to Tobias, “As soon as you enter the house, adore the Lord thy God, and giving thanks to Him, go to thy father and kiss him. Anoint his eyes with this gall of the fish, and his eyes shall be opened. Your father shall see the light of heaven, and shall rejoice in the sight of you.” The dog, which had been with them in the way, ran ahead and came in the house wagging his tail as if he had brought the news. (Tob 11:5-8)



**Fig 3.1.16 The Healing of Tobit**

Artist: Bernardo Strozzi (1581-1644)

When Tobias reached home, he anointed his father's eyes with the gall of the fish, and Tobit's sight was restored. Tobit, his wife and all that knew him, glorified God. Tobias' wife, Sarah, arrived seven days later, and with her came the servants, the animals, and an abundance of money in addition to that which the angel had received from Gabael. (Tob 11:6-18)

Tobit called his son and asked him what wages they should pay his good companion. Tobias said, “He conducted and brought me safe again, he received the money of Gabael, he caused me to have my wife, he chased the evil spirit from her, he delivered me from being devoured by the fish, and he also made you see the light of heaven. What can we pay him sufficient for all these things? I wish that he would accept half of all the things that have been brought.” They called the man (whom they did not know to be an angel), and Tobit asked him if he would accept the wage that they had figured. But the angel said to them secretly, “Bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you... Prayer is good with fasting and alms more than to lay up treasures of gold... When you did pray with tears, and did bury the dead, ... I offered your prayer to the Lord... Now the Lord has sent me to heal you, and to deliver Sarah, your son’s wife, from the devil. *For I am the angel Raphael,*<sup>201</sup> *one of the seven who stand before the Lord.*” When he had said these, he disappeared, and they could see him no more. (Tob 12:1-22)

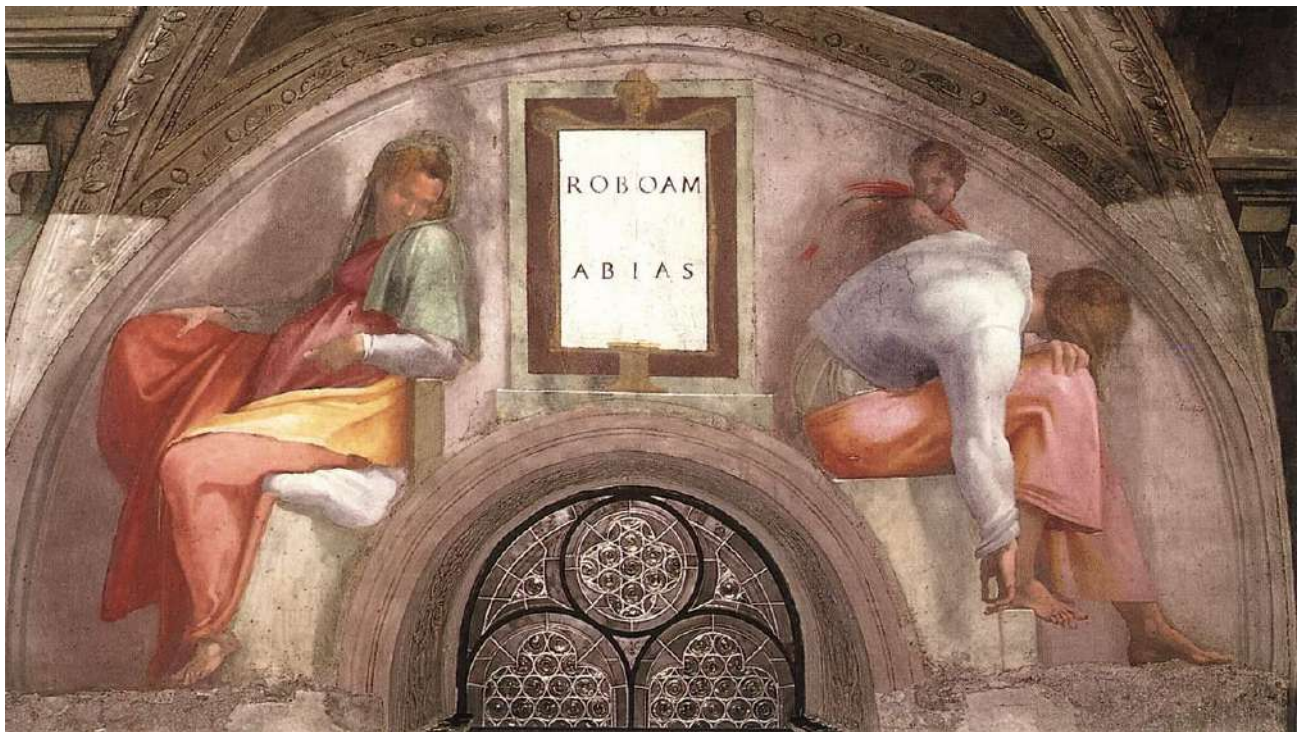
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<sup>201</sup> Is it not remarkable that the angel who helped Tobias find a cure for his father’s ailment had a name (Raphael) that in Hebrew means “God heals”? For this reason, many Catholics often had recourse to the angel Saint Raphael for help in healing their illnesses. Also, there is an old belief among Catholics that the unnamed angel who used to stir the healing waters in the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-4) was actually the angel Raphael.

## CHAPTER 2 THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH (930 – 587 B.C.)

### Rehoboam and the Kings of Judah (1 Kgs 14 - 2 Kgs 24; 2 Chr 11-36)

The first king of the *Kingdom of Judah* was Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Because Rehoboam would not lighten the burden of the people, ten tribes of Israel in the north refused to serve him and chose to serve Jeroboam as their king. Only the tribe of Judah (with the small tribe of Benjamin intermixed with it) remained with Rehoboam to form the southern kingdom. In the north Jeroboam made two golden calves to keep the tribes from going back to Jerusalem to worship. But the priests and Levites in the north moved back to Jerusalem because Jeroboam made to himself priests for the idols that he had made, and he and his sons had cast the Levites off from executing the priestly office to the Lord. (2 Chr 11:13-15)



**Fig 3.2.1 Rehoboam and His Son Abijam**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)



In the beginning Rehoboam did well and obeyed the Lord. Upon the advice of the Prophet Shemaiah, Rehoboam cancelled the attack he planned against the rebellious tribes of Israel. Instead, he spent his resources building walled cities in Judah. He fortified Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth-zur and many more cities with walls that enclose them. And when he had enclosed them with walls, he assigned governors in them, and made storehouses of oil and wine. In every city he also made an armory of shields and spears. For three years Rehoboam and his subjects walked in the ways of David and Solomon. (2 Chr 11:1-17)

When he saw that he had already become rich and strong, Rehoboam abandoned the law of the Lord. He and the people started to worship idols and engage in all kinds of abomination before the Lord. (1 Kgs 14:21-24)

God punished Rehoboam and all of Judah for this. For, in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, war erupted between Egypt and Judah. Shishak, king of Egypt, came with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen. In addition, the Libyans, the Sukkites and the Ethiopians came to help him.<sup>202</sup> Shishak took all the fortified cities in Judah, and came as far as Jerusalem. Through the prophet Shemaiah, the Lord told Rehoboam, “You have left me. So, I have left you in the hand of Shishak.” (2 Chr 12:1-12)

But God did not totally abandon Judah. For He did not allow the Kingdom of Judah to be destroyed by Shishak, but only to be plundered and pillaged by him. When Shishak went back to Egypt, he did not merely take away the treasures of the royal palace, but also looted the temple of all its treasures. (1 Kgs 14:25-26)

<sup>202</sup> In his book, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VIII, Ch. 10, #2, Flavius Josephus said that besides 1200 chariots and 60,000 men, there were also 400,000 infantry men, the greatest part of which were Libyans and Ethiopians. Naturally, the Jews were so afraid that they hardly fought, and Shishak was able to conquer all the fortified cities easily and without fighting.

The following is a list of the kings who reigned in the Kingdom of Judah (or the southern kingdom) from 930 – 587 B.C.:

Name	Term (B.C.)	Notes	Reference
<b>Rehoboam</b>	930 - 913	Fortified Judah, but fell into idolatry; as punishment, Judah was besieged by Egypt and the Temple looted.	1 Kgs 14:21-31; 2 Chr 10-12
<b>Abijam</b>	913 - 911	Reigned wickedly.	1 Kgs 15:1-8; 2 Chr 13
<b>Asa</b>	911 - 870	A good king; destroyed idolatry and defeated the Ethiopians.	1 Kgs 15:9-24; 2 Chr 14-16
<b>Jehoshaphat</b>	870 - 848	Governed well, but allied with the wicked King Ahab of Israel and his wife, Jezebel.	1 Kgs 22:41-50; 2 Chr 17-20
<b>Jehoram</b>	848 - 841	Reigned wickedly.	2 Kgs 8:16-24; 2 Chr 21
<b>Ahaziah</b>	841	Reigned wickedly; killed by King Jehu of Israel.	2 Kgs 8:25-9:29; 2 Chr 22:1-9
<b>Queen Athaliah</b>	841 - 835	Murdered the children of her own son and usurped the kingdom.	2 Kgs 11:1-20; 2 Chr 22:10-23:15
<b>Jehoash</b>	835 - 796	Governed well, but later fell into idolatry. The prophet <b>Joel</b> warned of divine judgment to come.	2 Kgs 11:21-12:21; 2 Chr 23:16-24:27
<b>Amaziah</b>	796 - 781	Governed well in the beginning, but after slaughtering the Edomites, he also worshipped their idols.	2 Kgs 14:1-22; 2 Ch4 25
<b>Uzziah (Azariah)</b>	781 - 740	Began well, but later usurped priestly functions and was punished with leprosy; <b>ISAIAH</b> began to prophesy.	2 Kgs 15:1-7; 2 Chr 26
<b>Jotham</b>	750 - 736	A godly king; he ruled during a great part of his father's reign, and after his death; <b>Micah</b> the prophet preached.	2 Kgs 15:32-38; 2 Chr 27
<b>Ahaz</b>	736 - 716	After receiving many benefits from God, he fell into idolatry, destroyed the holy vessels and closed the Temple.	2 Kgs 16:1-20; 2 Chr 28
<b>Hezekiah</b>	716 - 687	A godly king, he restored true religion in the kingdom, and wins over Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in a battle.	2 Kgs 18:1-20:21; 2 Chr 29-32
<b>Manasseh</b>	687 - 642	For his sins he was taken captive in Assyria, but repented. During his absence <b>Judith</b> saved Judah against Assyria.	2 Kgs 21:1-18; 2 Chr 33:1-20
<b>Amon</b>	642 - 640	Reigned wickedly. <b>Nahum</b> foretold the end of Nineveh.	2 Kgs 21:19-26; 2 Chr 33:21-25
<b>Josiah</b>	640 - 609	Destroyed idolatry, repaired the Temple, celebrated a solemn Pasch. <b>JEREMIAH</b> prophesied.	2 Kgs 22:1-23:30; 2 Chr 34-35
<b>Jehoahaz</b>	609	Reigned only three months.	2 Kgs 23:31-35; 2 Chr 36:1-4
<b>Jehoiakim</b>	609 - 598	Brother of Jehoahaz; reigned wickedly and was carried captive to Babylon along with <b>DANIEL</b> (Dan 1).	2 Kgs 23:36-24:7; 2 Chr 36:5-8
<b>Jehoiachin</b>	598	Son of Jehoiakim; reigned three months; was carried captive to Babylon along with <b>EZEKIEL</b> and other exiles.	2 Kgs 24:8-17; 2 Chr 36:9-10
<b>Zedekiah</b>	598 - 587	In the eleventh year of his reign the Temple was destroyed and most Jews were carried off into Babylon.	2 Kgs 24:18-25:7; 2 Chr 36:11-23

While most of the kings of Israel (except Jehu) were wicked, the line of kings in Judah was a mix of good and bad kings. For example, Abijam reigned wickedly, but his son, Asa, was a good king who destroyed idolatry in his kingdom. Jehoshaphat governed his kingdom well in the beginning, but later allied with the wicked King Ahab and Jezebel of Israel (2 Chr 18). King Azariah (or Uzziah) began as a good king, but later usurped priestly functions for which he was later punished with leprosy (2 Kgs 15; 2 Chr 26). On the other hand, King Hezekiah was so pious that his kingdom was blessed with prosperity and, by listening to the advice of Isaiah the prophet, he miraculously won a battle against the powerful Assyrian army led by Shalmaneser V's son, Sennacherib. (2 Chr 29-32)



**Fig 3.2.2 The Defeat of Sennacherib**

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)



The history of Judah had been a series of sinfulness and repentance, with God saving them whenever they repent and do penance. **Judith**, a beautiful and wealthy widow, was neither a queen nor a ruler of Judah, but the *Book of Judith* immortalizes her heroism and fidelity to God, which saved her Jewish nation from destruction by the mighty Holofernes, a general of the Assyrian army. The inspiring story of Judith will be given in the next section below.

As He had done with the Kingdom of Israel, God also sent holy *prophets* – namely, **Isaiah**, **Jeremiah** and some others – to warn the kings and people of Judah of the consequences of their sins and their need for repentance. In the end God also chastised the Kingdom of Judah for its repeated sins, just as He had done to the Kingdom of Israel. God allowed the Kingdom of Judah to be overcome by a foreign power, this time by the Babylonians.<sup>203</sup> For, after destroying Nineveh and defeating the Assyrians in 612 B.C., the powerful Babylonian army also went to Palestine in 607 B.C. and, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, they conquered the Kingdom of Judah and pillaged the city of Jerusalem. Then in 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and its temple altogether, and carried off most of the Jews into captivity in Babylon.<sup>204</sup> (2 Kgs 25:10-21)

The period that followed, when practically the entire Jewish nation was carried off as captives into Babylon, is called the **Babylonian Captivity** (587 – 538 B.C.), and will be the subject of Chapter 3.

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<sup>203</sup> Babylon is now called **Iraq**.

<sup>204</sup> In the ancient Near East the war between peoples was believed to be a war between the gods they worshipped, and that the gods had no power outside their own territory. The Babylonians carried the Jews as captives away from their land, instead of simply conquering them and placing them under tribute, because they believed that the God of the Jews would be powerless outside of Canaan, the land of the Jews. They thought that they would have more control of their prisoners if the captives were taken away from their country. It was for exactly the same reason that 135 years earlier, in 722 B.C., Sargon II deported the Ten Tribes of the Kingdom of Israel into Assyria, so that the captives might be better subdued (2 Kgs 17:1-18).

## **Judith, Heroine of Judah** - (ca. 645 B.C.) (*The Book of Judith*)

The story of Judith happened during the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah, at the time when he was taken captive in Babylon (2 Chr 33:11). Nebuchadnezzar,<sup>205</sup> the king of Assyria, had assigned his general, Holofernes, the task of conquering “all the kingdoms of the west” (Jdt 2:5), which included the Kingdom of Judah. Holofernes carried his campaign all the way to Judea and laid siege to the city of Bethulia. At first the Jewish people defended this city bravely, but when Holofernes discovered the aqueduct that supplied water to the city, he commanded that it be cut off, leaving the city with hardly any water. The people decided to surrender if God does not send them help within five days. (Jdt 7:1-25)



**Fig 3.2.3 General Holofernes of Assyria**  
Published by Guillaume Rouille (1518-1589)

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<sup>205</sup> This Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria, was a different person with the same name as Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In Assyrian records this Assyrian king was probably Ashurbanipal, who reigned in Nineveh during the time when Manasseh was king of Judah.

In the city there lived a young widow named Judith. Although she was exceedingly beautiful and her husband left her great riches, she lived a life of prayer and fasting, shut up in her private room with her maids. When she learned that the city was planning to surrender to the Assyrians, she sent for the ancients of the city and said to them, “Let us ask the Lord with tears, that according to His will He would show mercy... Let us humbly wait for His consolation ... and He will humble all the nations that rise up against us, and bring them to disgrace.” In reply they said to her, “Now, therefore, pray for us, for you are a holy woman, and one fearing God.” (Jdt 8:1-29)

Judith went to her private room, laid ashes on her head, and fell prostrate before the Lord and prayed to God for assistance. Then, she washed her body, anointed herself with the best perfumes, put on her richest clothing, and went with her maid to the Assyrian camp. When the watchmen of the Assyrians stopped her, she said: “I am a daughter of the Hebrews, and I have fled from them because I knew they would be made a prey to you... I thought I’d tell prince Holofernes their secrets, and show him how he may take them without the loss of one man of his army.” She was brought to Holofernes. When Holofernes saw her beauty and heard her intentions, he was pleased with her. Judith asked if she could go out at night and before day to pray. Holofernes commanded his guards to let her go out and in, to adore her God as she pleased, for three days. (Jdt 9:1-12:6)

Four days later Holofernes gave a banquet for his servants and invited Judith to come over. Judith came dressed in her best garments. The heart of Holofernes was ravished with desire for her, and he ate and drank so much that he became drunk and fell asleep. When all the servants had left, Judith stood before the bed praying with tears for God to strengthen her. Then she took Holofernes’ sword, cut off his head, put it in a bag, and gave it to her maid. As usual the guards opened the gates for them and let them out. Quickly she went to Bethulia and all ran to meet her. (Jdt 12:10-13:15)





**Fig 3.2.4 Judith with the Head of Holofernes**

Artist: Heinrich Schwemminger (1803-1884)

When all had gathered and held their peace, Judith took the head of Holofernes out of the bag and said, “Praise the Lord our God who has not forsaken those who hope in Him... Give glory to Him because He is good, and His mercy endures forever.” (Jdt 13:16-21)

In the morning, as Judith had instructed them, the people hung up the head of Holofernes upon the city walls, took up arms, and rushed out toward the Assyrian camp as though making an assault. When the Assyrians went to awaken Holofernes and saw his headless body, they were horrified. And when the Assyrian soldiers themselves heard that their general was beheaded, they were seized with trembling and fear and thought of nothing but save themselves by running away. Seeing them fleeing, the children of Israel pursued them with the edge of the sword. (Jdt 14:1-15:6)

### COMMENTARY

1. Judith was a type of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As Judith had cut off the head of Holofernes, thus saving the Jews from captivity, the Virgin Mary trampled the head of the serpent by her Divine Son, thus saving the world from eternal damnation. For this reason, the Church uses the words spoken in praise of Judith as praises to the Virgin Mary, such as:

*“Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the most high God, above all women upon the earth”* (Jdt 13:23; or Jdt 13:18 in the *Nova Vulgata*).

*“For He hath so magnified thy name this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men”* (Jdt 13:25; or Jdt 13:19 in the *Nova Vulgata*).

*“In every nation which shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on occasion of thee”* (Jdt 13:31; or Jdt 14:7 in the *Nova Vulgata*).

*“Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people”* (Jdt 15:10; or Jdt 15:9 in the *Nova Vulgata*).

2. Note that the *Nova Vulgata* and the newer English translations of the Bible changed the texts and verse numbering based on old manuscripts, such as the Septuagint. However, St. Jerome could have had access to even older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that are now lost to us, but which are better and more reliable than today's extant manuscripts. Therefore, making changes to the Latin Vulgate based solely on manuscripts that are currently extant is rather risky.



## Isaiah, King of the Prophets

(The Book of Isaiah)

Isaiah was an important prophet in the Old Testament. He did not merely predict the punishments that would befall the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, but he also made prophecies about the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.



**Fig 3.2.5 The Prophet Isaiah**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

Isaiah prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. In the sixth chapter of his book Isaiah described how he was called to prophesy in God's name. He said that in the year that King Uzziah died he had a vision of the Lord sitting upon a high and elevated throne. Upon it stood six-winged seraphim,<sup>206</sup> with two wings to cover their faces, two wings to cover their feet, and two more wings to fly. They cried one to another, saying, "*Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts. All the earth is full of his glory!*" Then Isaiah said, "Woe is me, because I have held my peace, for I am a man of unclean lips."<sup>207</sup> One of the seraphim flew to him and laid a piece of burning coal in his mouth. The seraph said, "Behold this has touched your lips, and your sin shall be cleansed."<sup>208</sup> (Isa 6:1-7)



**Fig 3.2.6 The Cleansing of Isaiah's Lips**  
Artist: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770)

<sup>206</sup> *Seraphim* is the plural form of *seraph*, which refers to one of nine ranks of angels in Heaven.

<sup>207</sup> "Unclean lips" here do not refer to foul language, but to a speaking impediment.

<sup>208</sup> If impediments are attributed to sin, then their removal is also called the cleansing of sin.



Isaiah then heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?” Isaiah answered, “Lo, here I am, send me.” Then the Lord said, “Go, and you shall say to this people: “Hearing, hear, and understand not. See the vision, and know it not.”<sup>209</sup> (Isa 6:8-9)

Isaiah’s role as a prophet was not limited to preaching penance and warning people of impending doom. He also served by advising kings about their foreign alliances. For example, when the Kingdom of Judah was being threatened by the combined forces of Syria and Israel, Isaiah counseled King Ahaz to trust in the Lord, rather than form an alliance with pagan Assyria<sup>210</sup> (Isa 7:1-4). Likewise, when the people were trying to persuade Hezekiah, king of Judah, to form an alliance with Egypt against Assyria, Isaiah advised him not to do it. Hezekiah heeded Isaiah’s advice. This led to his winning the war against Sennacherib of Assyria. (2 Chr 29-32)

As a prophet Isaiah made some very astounding predictions that were historically fulfilled years after the prophecies were made. For example, he predicted that the northern kingdom of Israel would cease to exist<sup>211</sup> (Isa 7:8); that the southern kingdom of Judah would be conquered and the people exiled to Babylon (Isa 39:5-7); and that the Jews would be freed from captivity by a man named Cyrus.<sup>212</sup> (Isa 45:1)

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<sup>209</sup> Isaiah received the commission to preach, but the cited verse means that his preaching would be met with incomprehension on the part of the listeners. This should not be understood as God causing this incomprehension. God foresees it, and simply incorporates it in His instructions to Isaiah. What God was telling Isaiah to tell the people was therefore this: “I preach (but you refuse to listen), so understand not. I show the truth (but you refuse to look), so know not.”

<sup>210</sup> King Ahaz did not listen. He appealed for help to the king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser II. Assyria indeed repelled the enemies of Judah, including the Edomites and the Philistines, but this afflicted rather than helped Judah. For, Assyria exacted a heavy tribute (2 Chr 28:16-20), and King Ahaz had to take out the silver and gold in the Temple to pay them to the king of Assyria (2 Kgs 16:5-9).

<sup>211</sup> In Isa 7:8 Isaiah said, “within sixty-five years Ephraim shall cease to be a people.” The name “Ephraim” did not refer solely to the tribe of Ephraim, for it was often used by the prophets to refer to the northern kingdom, since it was the dominant tribe in Israel.

<sup>212</sup> The prophecy was fulfilled in 536 B.C. when Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, conquered Babylon.



But some of Isaiah's best prophecies were those that he wrote about our Savior, who was born seven hundred years after these prophecies were made. Some of these prophecies are the following:

1. *The Messiah will be born of a virgin and called Emmanuel* (Isa 7:14).
2. *The Messiah will be called by other names as well* (Isa 9:6).
3. *The Messiah will come from the family of David* (Isa 11:1-2).
4. *The Messiah will work many miracles* (Isa 29:18; 35:4-6).
5. *The Messiah will be heralded by a messenger*<sup>213</sup> (Isa 40:3).
6. *The Messiah will be a shepherd to his people* (Isa 40:11).
7. *The Messiah will be a light to the Gentiles* (Isa 42:6; 49:6).
8. *The Messiah will be meek and mild* (Isa 42:2-4; 53:7), *sinless and without guile* (Isa 53:9).
9. *The Messiah will be a teacher and prophet* (Isa 61:1).
10. *The Messiah will be a priest and victim* (Isa 53:5-7).
11. *The Messiah will purify the priesthood* (Isa 56:7).
12. *The Messiah will be despised by His people* (Isa 53:3).
13. *The Messiah will be dishonored and spat upon* (Isa 50:6).
14. *The Messiah will be numbered among criminals* (Isa 53:12).
15. *The Messiah will be buried with the wicked, but in the tomb of the rich* (Isa 53:9)

The entire Chapter 53 of the *Book of Isaiah* may be regarded as a prophetic song on "The Suffering Savior."<sup>214</sup> It was in Isaiah's prophecy on Christ's passion that he called Christ "a man of sorrows" (Isa 53:3).

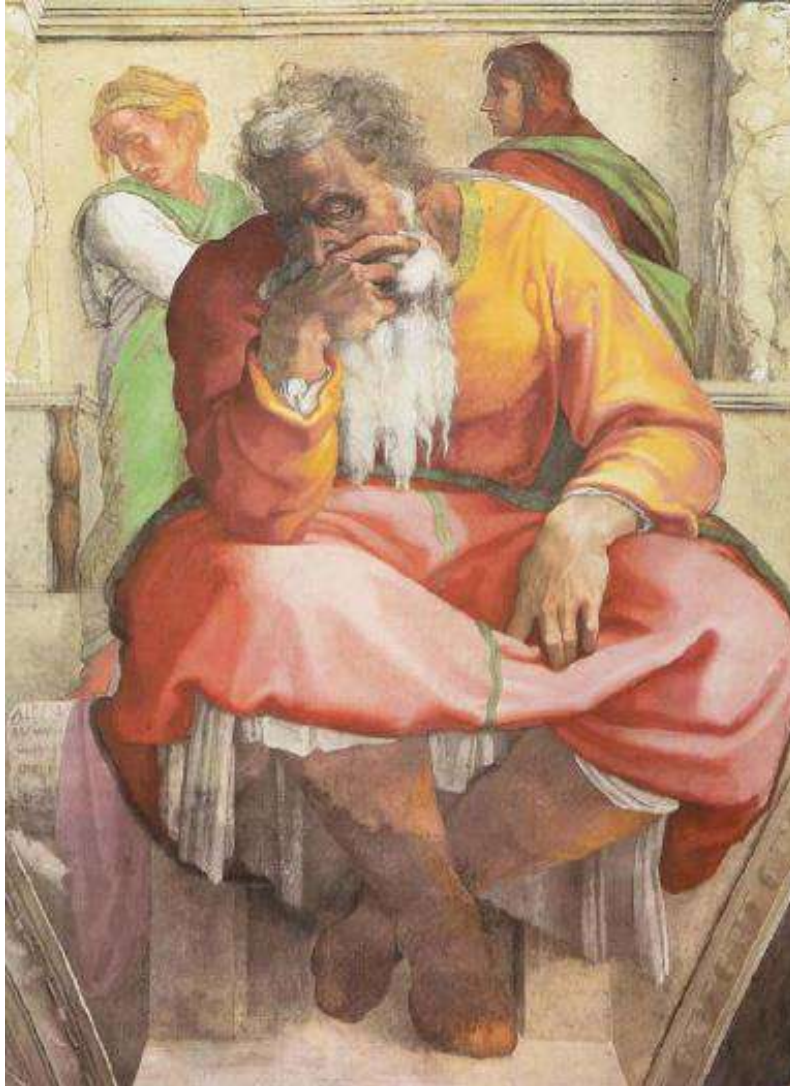
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<sup>213</sup> This messenger was St. John the Baptist (Matt 3:1-3).

<sup>214</sup> Instead of "the Suffering Savior," some commentators speak of Christ as "the Suffering Servant" (See Isa 42:1). This terminology is also correct because Christ, *as man*, is God's servant.

## Jeremiah, Most Christlike of the Prophets

(The *Book of Jeremiah* and *Lamentations*)



**Fig 3.2.7 The Prophet Jeremiah**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

Jeremiah came from a priestly family in Anathoth, a town in the land of Benjamin. It was during the reign of the pious king Josiah that he was called by God to prophesy. God said to him, “Before I formed you in the bowels of your mother, I knew you. And before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you and made you a prophet into the nations.” (Jer 1:1-5)

“Ah, Lord,” Jeremiah replied, “behold I cannot speak, for I am only a child.” The Lord told him not to be afraid. Then He touched his mouth and said, “Behold I have given My words in your mouth. Lo, I have set you this day over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root up and to pull down, to waste and to destroy, to build and to plant.” (Jer 1:6-10)

Like other prophets, Jeremiah foresaw the coming downfall of the Kingdom of Judah. So, he pleaded passionately for the people to repent: “Return, O rebellious Israel...Return, O you revolting children” (Jer 3:12, 14). He assured them of God’s forgiveness if they would abandon their wicked ways: “Wash your heart from wickedness, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved...” (Jer 4:14)

Jeremiah denounced those who continually invoke the temple of the Lord and who rely falsely on the protection of the temple, while they continue to live a life of abomination. He declared that, since they have converted God’s house into a den of robbers, God would allow a disaster to happen to the temple of Jerusalem, similar to that which happened to the temple at Shiloh<sup>215</sup> (Jer 7:11-14).

Jeremiah continued to warn the people of Judah, that if they do not abandon idolatry and their wicked ways, God would send Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to conquer Jerusalem and all the other nations around it. Judah would be desolated and *they would serve the king of Babylon for seventy years*. Then, at the end of seventy years, Babylon itself would also be punished for its iniquity<sup>216</sup> (Jer 25:1-13).

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<sup>215</sup> In Shiloh, during the time when Eli was judge in Israel, the tabernacle was attacked and the Ark of the Covenant was forcefully taken by the Philistines, as punishment for the sins of Eli’s sons (See Part Two, Story 5).

<sup>216</sup> At the end of seventy years, that is 538 B.C., Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, the king of Persia. At that time the king of Babylon was no longer King Nebuchadnezzar, but King Nabonidus.



During the reign of King Jehoiakim the Lord spoke to Jeremiah and commanded him to write down all the punishments that were to befall the Jews for their idolatry and wickedness. Jeremiah took a man, named Baruch, to be his secretary, and he dictated to him the punishments that were coming to the Jews (Jer 36:1-5).



**Fig 3.2.8 Baruch Writes Jeremiah's Prophecies**

Artist: Paul Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

Afterward Jeremiah asked Baruch to read his prophecies to the people. Baruch took the scroll to the temple and read it for all the people to hear. When King Jehoiakim heard about the scroll containing Jeremiah's prophecies, he asked his servant to bring it to him. The servant brought the scroll to the king, but as soon as he had read three or four pages of it, the king cut them up and threw them into the fire until the entire scroll was burned. The king was angry and commanded to seize Jeremiah and his secretary, but the Lord hid them. Then God commanded Jeremiah to take a new scroll and write again everything that was written on the first one that the king had burned. (Jer 36:6-28)

It didn't take long and the prophecies of Jeremiah began to unfold. Nebuchadnezzar came, conquered the Kingdom of Judah, and took some of the precious vessels in the temple to his palace in Babylon. Then he also took Jehoiakim and many others as captives to Babylon. Among those taken captives along with King Jehoiakim were the prophet **Daniel** and three young men: Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. (2 Chr 36:5-7; Dan 1:1-7)

Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin. But Jehoiachin reigned only three months because Nebuchadnezzar again laid siege to Jerusalem, pillaged the city, and took Jehoiachin along with other captives, to Babylon. At this point Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, the new king of Judah. (2 Kgs 24:10-17)

Meanwhile some people became angry with Jeremiah because of his gloomy predictions about the future of Jerusalem. They lowered him into a dungeon where there was no water, but mud. When King Zedekiah heard this, he commanded his servant, Ebed-melech, to rescue Jeremiah. He then moved Jeremiah to a more suitable prison where he was kept until the fall of Jerusalem. In return for saving him, Jeremiah advised the king not to rebel, but to give himself up to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. (Jer 38:1-28)



King Zedekiah did not listen to Jeremiah's advice, but resisted the king of Babylon. In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign Nebuchadnezzar began his attack against Jerusalem. After a two years' siege, the Chaldeans<sup>217</sup> did not merely plunder Jerusalem and the temple, but also ruined and burned them. They captured King Zedekiah and brought him, his family and most of the people to Babylon. Some poor people, who had nothing at all, were permitted to stay in the land of Judah (Jer 39:1-10; 2 Chr 36:11-21; 2 Kgs 25:1-21).



**Fig 3.2.9 Jeremiah Laments the Destruction of Jerusalem**

Artist: Eduard Julius Friedrich Bendemann (1811-1889)

After the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonians released Jeremiah from the Jewish prison and offered him a home in Babylon. But Jeremiah chose to remain with the poor in Judah. When the rest of the people went to Egypt, they took Jeremiah and Baruch with them, and Jeremiah predicted that Egypt, too, would be destroyed by the Babylonians (Jer 43:6-13).

<sup>217</sup> The Chaldeans were a nomadic people who became absorbed and assimilated to Babylonia and, for all practical purposes, were considered Babylonians. They constituted the army that launched the attack on Judah.



In his other book, *Lamentations*, Jeremiah wrote five mournful poems to express the deep sorrow he and other Jews felt due to the destruction of their once great city: Jerusalem.<sup>218</sup> Speaking of Jerusalem he said, “How does the city sit solitary that was full of people! How has the mistress of the Gentiles become like a widow<sup>219</sup>... Weeping she has wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her. All her friends have despised her, and have become her enemies” (Lam 1:1-2).

But Jeremiah was not just a weeping prophet without any consolation. God revealed to him that at the end of the seventy years of Babylonian domination, God would call the Jews back to Jerusalem (Jer 29:10-15), and He would make a “new covenant”<sup>220</sup> with His people (Jer 31:31-34).

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<sup>218</sup> At a more profound level the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah allude to the sorrows of our Suffering Savior, and to man’s sad condition when separated from God.

<sup>219</sup> Indeed, it was difficult to imagine that Jerusalem, once full of people, and visited by the kings and queens of other nations, was now desolate and in ruins. Jeremiah asked, “How could it happen?” How could the precious vessels, and anything of value in the Temple, once the pride of King Solomon and the entire Jewish nation, were now being used to adorn the shrines of Babylonian idols?

<sup>220</sup> The prophet Ezekiel also spoke of this new covenant (Ez 36:24-28). Christ mentioned it during the Last Supper (Matt 26:26-28; Lk 22:19-20), and St. Paul explained it (Heb 10).

## COMMENTARY

1. Jeremiah was described as “the most Christlike of the prophets.” For, as Christ was known before He was conceived (Luke 1:31), so was Jeremiah (Jer 1:5). As Christ cleansed the temple of thieves (Matt 21:13; John 2:13-16), Jeremiah preached to purify the temple of evil-doers (Jer 7:1-11). As Christ wept over Jerusalem for its impending judgment (Luke 19:41-44), so did Jeremiah (Jer 9:1; 13:17). As Christ was persecuted for his teachings, Jeremiah was persecuted for his prophecies, and became “a man of contention” (Jer 15:10). As Christ lived a celibate life, Jeremiah was forbidden to marry and have a family on account of his mission (Jer 16:1). As Christ was mocked (Luke 18:32; 22:63), Jeremiah was made a laughingstock (Jer 20:7). As Christ was found worthy of death by priests (Matt 26:65-66), Jeremiah was given a judgment of death by priests (Jer 26:11). No detail of Jeremiah’s death was given in the Bible, but an ancient tradition holds that Jeremiah laid down his life by being stoned to death in Egypt by his fellow Jews. Jeremiah could therefore be compared to Christ who died by crucifixion instigated also by the Jews.
2. Other prophets had also foreseen the fall of Jerusalem, but only Jeremiah prophesied the length of time that Judah would *serve* Babylon, which was a total of *seventy years* (Jer 25:11). Jeremiah did NOT predict the length of the Babylonian Captivity (587-538 B.C.), which was the time when the entire Jewish nation was forced to leave their homes and live as captives in Babylon. This “captivity” only took five decades, whereas the length of time that Judah “served” the king of Babylon was longer than that. Judah began to serve Babylon first, when it paid tribute to Babylon, or when its treasures were forcibly taken from it and brought to Babylon; and second, when some of its nobilities and skilled artisans (not the entire Jewish population) were forced to work in the service of the king of Babylon. This happened in 607 and 597 B.C, and continued through the Babylonian Captivity which ended in 538 B.C. Altogether this servitude comes to a total of seventy years by the Hebrew method of counting.
3. Jeremiah predicted that at the end of seventy years, Babylon itself would be punished on account of its iniquities (Jer 25:12). This prophecy was fulfilled, too. For, in 538 B.C. Cyrus, the king of Persia, conquered Babylon, and this ended the seventy-year Babylonian domination of Judah.

## Other Prophets before the Destruction of Jerusalem

Besides Isaiah and Jeremiah, there were other prophets who prophesied in Judah before, or shortly after, the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. These prophets had written shorter books, and are therefore called “minor” prophets.<sup>221</sup>

**Micah** (740 B.C.) – preached during the reign of Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah. A contemporary of Isaiah, Micah warned of God’s coming judgment on the injustices committed against the poor, but he also foretold that a Savior would come from Bethlehem: *“And you, Bethlehem Ephrata, are a little one among the thousands of Judah. Out of you shall come forth he that is to be the ruler in Israel”* (Mi 5:2).



**Fig 3.2.10 The Prophet Micah**

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<sup>221</sup> If the length of their books is the basis for calling these prophets “major” or “minor,” then there are actually only four major prophets: **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel** and **Daniel**. All the rest wrote short books, including Amos, Hosea and Jonah from the Kingdom of Israel. They are called minor prophets.



**Nahum** (642 B.C.) – prophesied that God would put an end to the bloody regime of the Assyrian Empire by destroying Nineveh, its capital city. “Woe to you, O city of blood, all full of lies and violence: plundering shall not depart from you”<sup>222</sup> (Nah 3:1).

**Zephania** (640 B.C.) – warned of the punishment that would fall on the Jews and other nations of the world on account of their sins: *Dies irae dies illa*, “That day is a day of wrath” (Zep 1:15). However, he also prophesied the future cleansing and conversion of the Gentiles (Zep 3:8-13) and the regathering of the remnants of Israel toward the end (Zep 3:14-20).

**Habakkuk** (609 B.C.) – preached during the reign of King Jehoiakim. His prophecy, written in the form of a dialogue between himself and God, gave a comforting message to the righteous, and a stern warning to the unrighteous.

**Obadiah** (585 B.C.) – prophesied shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem. He predicted that the long-standing enemy of Israel, the Edomites, who also looted the city of Jerusalem after its fall to the Babylonians,<sup>223</sup> would be overthrown.

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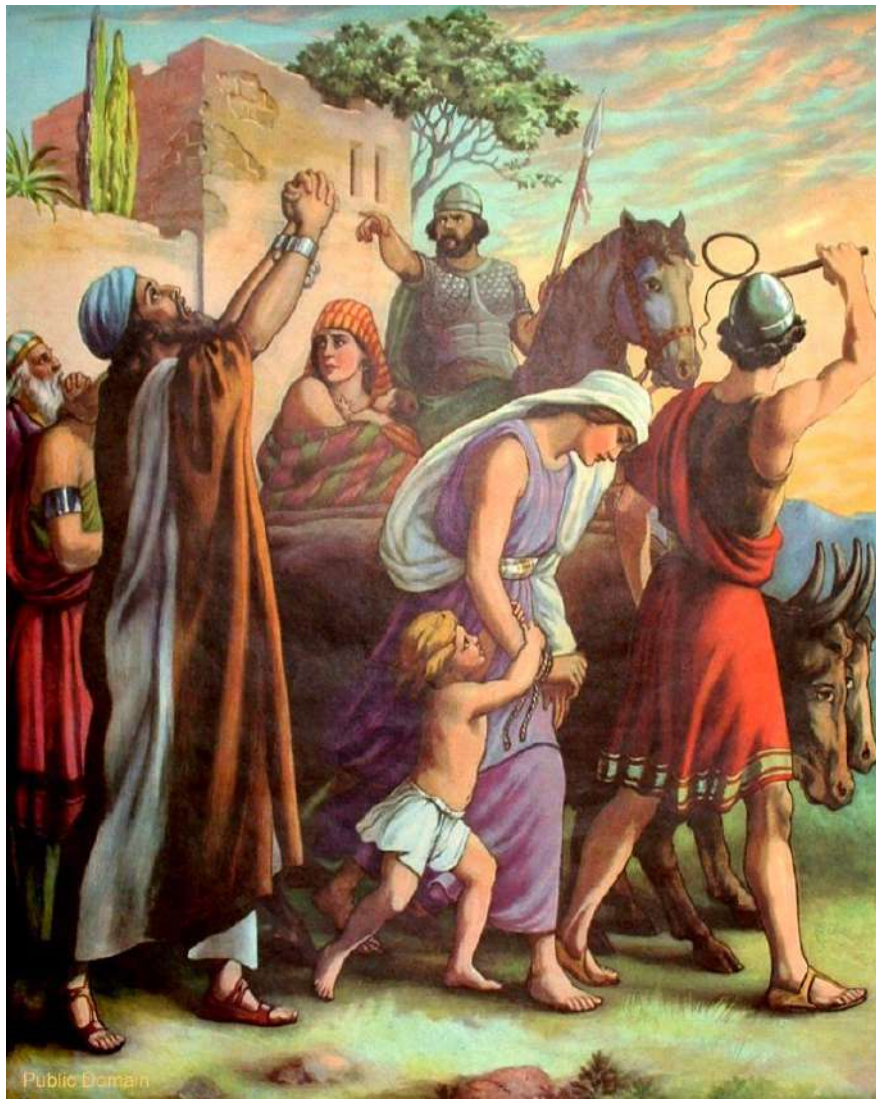
<sup>222</sup> The prophecy was fulfilled when Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C.

<sup>223</sup> The role of the Edomites in looting the city of Jerusalem of its treasures was not mentioned either in 2 Kgs or 2 Chr. We learn this detail only from Obadiah, verse 13. However, the fall of Edom was predicted also by Ezekiel (Ez 25:12-14).

## CHAPTER 3 THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (587 - 538 B.C.)

### The Three Waves of Deportation

The deportation of the Jews to Babylon during the last years of the Kingdom of Judah was not accomplished at one time. Three deportations are actually mentioned in Holy Scripture, although the cited number of captives are conflicting (Jer 52:28-30; Dan 1:1-6, 2 Kgs 24:14, and 2 Kgs 25:11).



**Fig 3.3.1 Jews Exiled to Babylon**  
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

The *first wave of deportation* (ca. 607 B.C.) happened during the reign of King Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came and conquered Jerusalem, bound Jehoiakim and took him to Babylon as captive. But he also took into Babylon some of the bright, young men and nobilities who were “skillful in wisdom, acute in knowledge, instructed in science.” These young men were brought to Babylon that they might acquire the learning and language of the Chaldeans. Among the young exiles were **Daniel** and his three friends: Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan 1:1-6; 2 Chr 36:5-8).

The *second wave of deportation* (ca. 597 B.C.) happened during the reign of Jehoiakim’s son, King Jehoiachin. Nebuchadnezzar and his servants came, besieged the city, and carried off the treasures of the king’s palace and Solomon’s temple. They also brought Jehoiachin to Babylon, together with his princes, his valiant men, and all craftsmen and smiths – about ten thousand captives in all. Among those who were brought to Babylon at this time was the prophet **Ezekiel**<sup>224</sup> (2 Kgs 24:8-17; Ez 1:1-3).

The *third wave of deportation* (ca. 587 B.C.), and the largest, happened during the reign of the rebellious King Zedekiah of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar sent the Chaldeans to Judah, who then slew those in the sanctuary, men and women, young and old, without compassion. They took all the precious vessels and treasures of the temple and of the king’s palace, and brought them to Babylon. Then they broke the walls of Jerusalem, burned the king’s palace and the temple, and carried off to Babylon the rest of the Jews who escaped from the sword. Practically the entire Jewish people went into exile, except the poorest of the land whom the captain of the guard allowed to stay in Judah as vinedressers and plowmen (2 Kgs 25:1-21; 2 Chr 36:11-23).

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<sup>224</sup> We know this about Ezekiel because he said that he was “among the exiles” by the river Chebar when he received his commission to prophesy, and he specified the time of this event by using as his point of reference the year that King Jehoiachin himself was exiled to Babylon (Ez 1:1-3).



The term “Babylonian Captivity” refers to the time when the *entire* Jewish people were forced to leave their homes and live in Babylon as servants of the king of Babylon. It is therefore commonly understood to have started only with the third deportation in 587 B.C., and ended when the exiles were allowed to return again to their homes in 538 B.C. By the Hebrew method of reckoning, which include the first and last year, this is a total of 50 years, or five decades. According to this understanding, Jeremiah’s prophecy given in Jer 25:11 is a prediction of the length of Judah’s servitude to Babylon, but not a prediction of the length of Babylonian Captivity.<sup>225</sup>

Many of the Jews were not happy when they left their country. Psalm 137 echoes the sentiments that they had in their heart:

*“Upon the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat and wept  
When we remembered Zion...  
They that carried us away said:  
Sing to us a hymn of the songs of Zion.  
How shall we sing the song of the Lord  
In a strange land?  
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
Let my right hand be forgotten.” – Ps 137:1-5*

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<sup>225</sup> Some people define the term “Babylonian Captivity” to refer to the time when sizable number of Jews, although not the entire nation, began to be deported as captives to Babylon. Thus defined, Babylonian Captivity started with the first deportation in 607 B.C. and ended in 538 B.C., a total of seventy years also. There is nothing wrong with this definition, except that it is not the common acceptation of the term. If “Babylonian Captivity” is understood to have begun with the first deportation, then Jeremiah’s prophecy could be stated as referring to the length of the Babylonian Captivity.



**Fig 3.3.2 Jews Mourn their Exile in Babylon**

Artist: Eduard Bendemann (1811-1889)

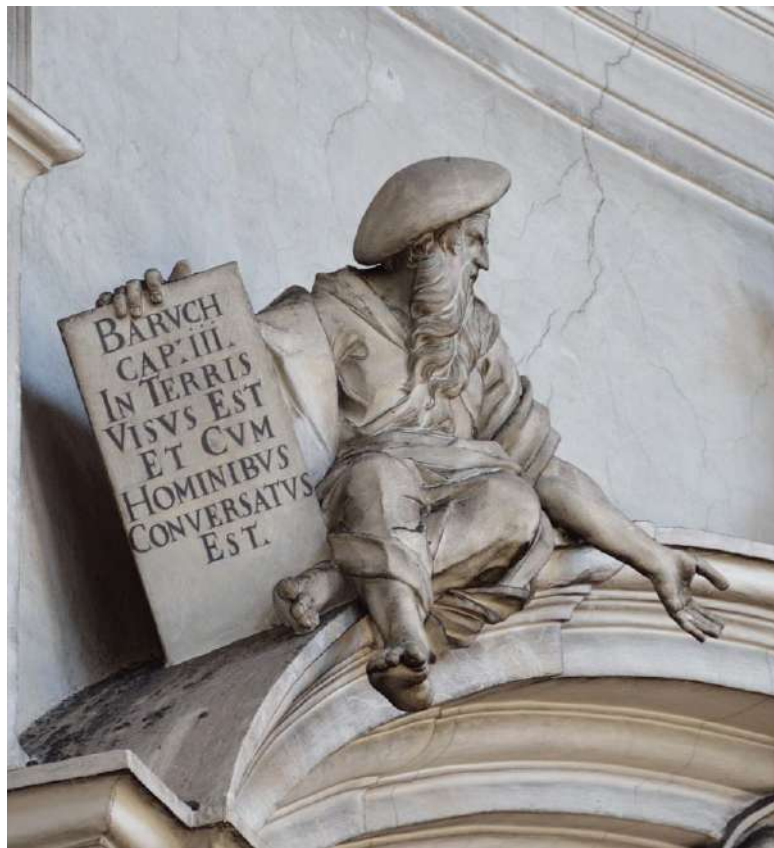
But not all the Jews were unhappy. The exiles in Babylon were not treated like slaves, as they were so treated in Egypt during the time of Moses. Many of them were actually treated kindly by the king of Babylon,<sup>226</sup> even if some of them had to do menial jobs. The end result was that some of them prospered, and business was good. Still, since they did not have a temple anymore, the more conscientious Jewish families missed their ability to offer holocausts to God, or to practice their religion as they ought. They also had to contend with a mistaken king of Babylon who sometimes would force them to worship an idol rather than the true God. Thus, many of the Jews felt a deep longing for the religious liberties they enjoyed in their own land.

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<sup>226</sup> Even King Joachin was treated well (Jer 52:31-34).

## Prophets of the Exiles

There were three prophets of the exiles during the Babylonian Captivity: Ezekiel, Baruch and Daniel. **Ezekiel** was a major prophet and will be discussed in the next section below. **Baruch** was Ezekiel's secretary, and he was probably the one who compiled and completed the book that is attributed to Ezekiel. However, he also wrote a short book himself and is therefore considered a minor prophet. As a prophet, he tried to comfort the exiles with a prayer of confession and deliverance, a poem in praise of Wisdom, and a prophecy that the Exile would soon end.



**Fig 3.3.3 The Prophet Baruch**  
Statue in the Servite church in Vienna

**Daniel** was a major prophet during the Babylonian Captivity and, because of his varied and interesting experiences in Babylon, his story will be in a separate chapter all its own.



## Ezekiel, the Prophet of God's Faithfulness

(The Book of Ezekiel)

Ezekiel was one of the Jews deported to Babylon along with King Jehoachin of Judah (Ez 1:2). He therefore preached mainly to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. However, he began his work a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C, and even predicted it.



**Fig 3.3.4 The Prophet Ezekiel**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

One day, as he was by the river Chebar, Ezekiel saw a vision of four living creatures, each of which has the figure of a man. But each creature has four faces, four wings, straight feet, and the sole of their foot was like the sole of a calf's foot. The four faces of each creature were like the face of a man (front face), a lion (right face), an ox (left face), and an eagle (back face). Over their heads was a firmament above which was something that has the likeness of a man sitting on a throne.<sup>227</sup> (Ez 1:6-10, 26)

Then Ezekiel heard a voice from the throne that said, "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious people, that have revolted from me. They and their fathers have transgressed my covenant even unto this day... Thou shalt speak my words to them, if perhaps they will hear, and forbear. For they provoke me to anger." (Ez 2:3, 7)

Thus did Ezekiel receive his commission to prophesy to the wayward Jews in Babylon. "Open thy mouth and eat what I give thee," the Lord said. God handed him a scroll on which was written lamentations, canticles and woe. "Eat this book," the Lord said, "and go speak to the children of Israel." Ezekiel did eat it, and it was sweet as honey in his mouth.<sup>228</sup> (Ez 2:8-3:3)

Ezekiel warned the exiles of the punishment that would fall on Jerusalem (Ez 4-24), Egypt and other nations (Ez 25-32), because of their abominations and idolatry. At first they did not believe. But in 586 B.C., when news of the destruction of Jerusalem reached Babylon, they felt devastated and Ezekiel consoled them with the promise of God's future blessings: the restoration of Israel (Ez 39:21-29) and the rebuilding of a new temple. (Ez 40-48)

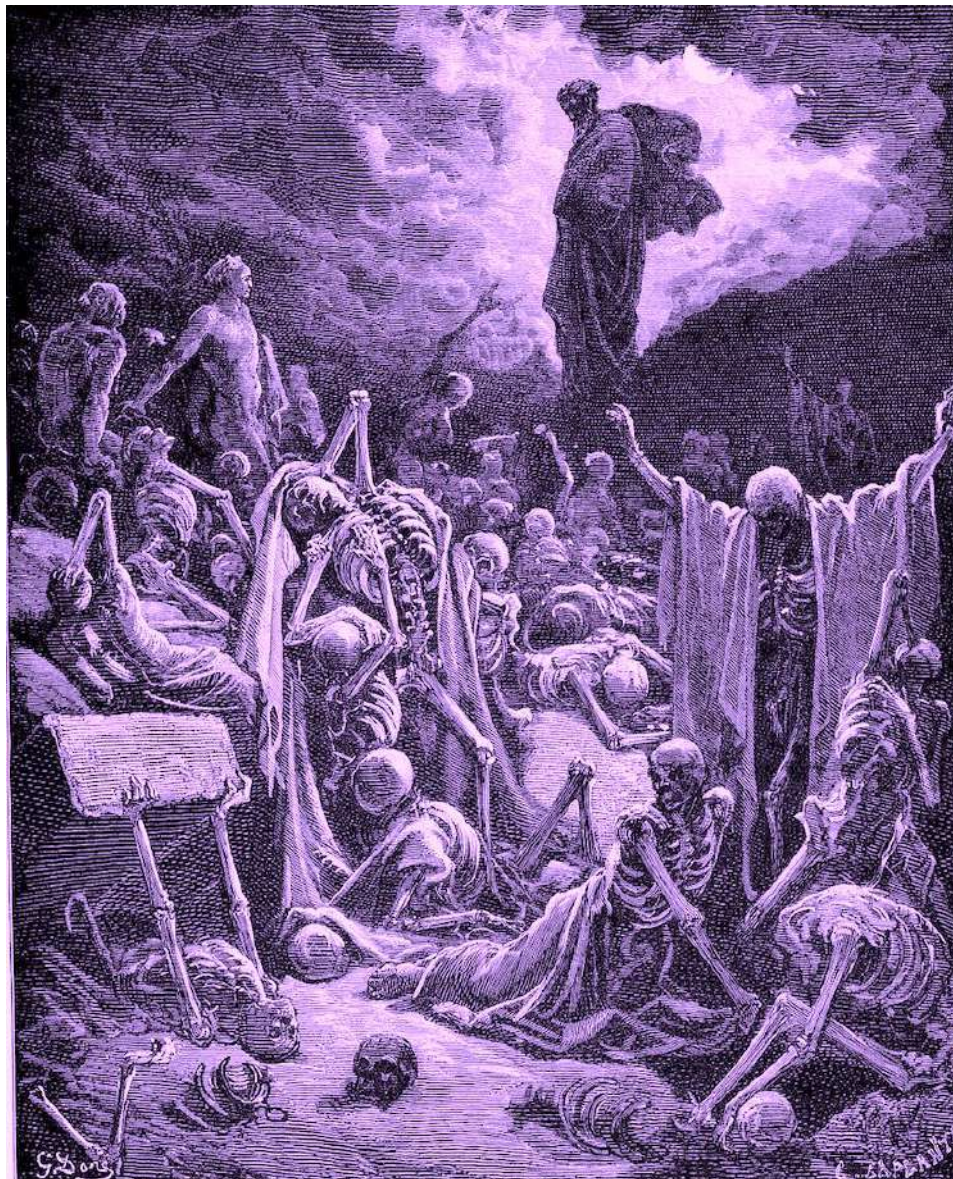
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<sup>227</sup> Based on Sir 49:10, the man on the throne represented God, and the four living creatures were cherubim or angels that formed a chariot supporting His throne. The image may not mean anything to Ezekiel's mission as a prophet, but it has a parallel in St. John's vision given in the *Book of Revelation*, where he saw four living creatures who serve and worship before God's throne (Rev 4:6-11).

<sup>228</sup> The symbolism means that the mission to prophesy was unappealing, but when Ezekiel obediently accepted it, he found it a rewarding endeavor.



Because of what happened to their country and their nation, the exiles found Ezekiel's prophecies and God's promises difficult to believe. "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost . . .," they'd say. But, to reassure them of *His faithfulness*, God gave Ezekiel a vision where he found himself in a **valley of dry bones**. Then God told Ezekiel that the dry bones were the Jews, and if he would prophesy to them, He could endow even the dry bones of the dead with new life. Ezekiel prophesied as he was told, and the spirit came into the bones, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet. (Ez 37:1-14)



**Fig 3.3.5 Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones**

Artist: Paul Gustave Doré (1832-1883)



Inspired by this vision Ezekiel prophesied to the Jews that God would fulfill His promise, that He would deliver them from captivity by the Babylonians and bring them back to the land of Israel (Ez 37:14). God will gather all the children of Israel together, and Judah and Israel would once more be united into one kingdom (Ez 37:16-25). After this God will also make an everlasting covenant with His people. (Ez 37:26-28)

*God is faithful because He is a good shepherd.* In an earlier chapter God, speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, reprimanded the “shepherds” of Israel (that means, the kings, princes, chief priests and scribes) for their nation’s misery and ill fate. For the shepherds failed to lead the people to the worship of the true God. “Woe to the shepherds of Israel, that fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk, and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat, but my flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again... And my sheep were scattered, because there was no shepherd...” (Ez 34:2-5)

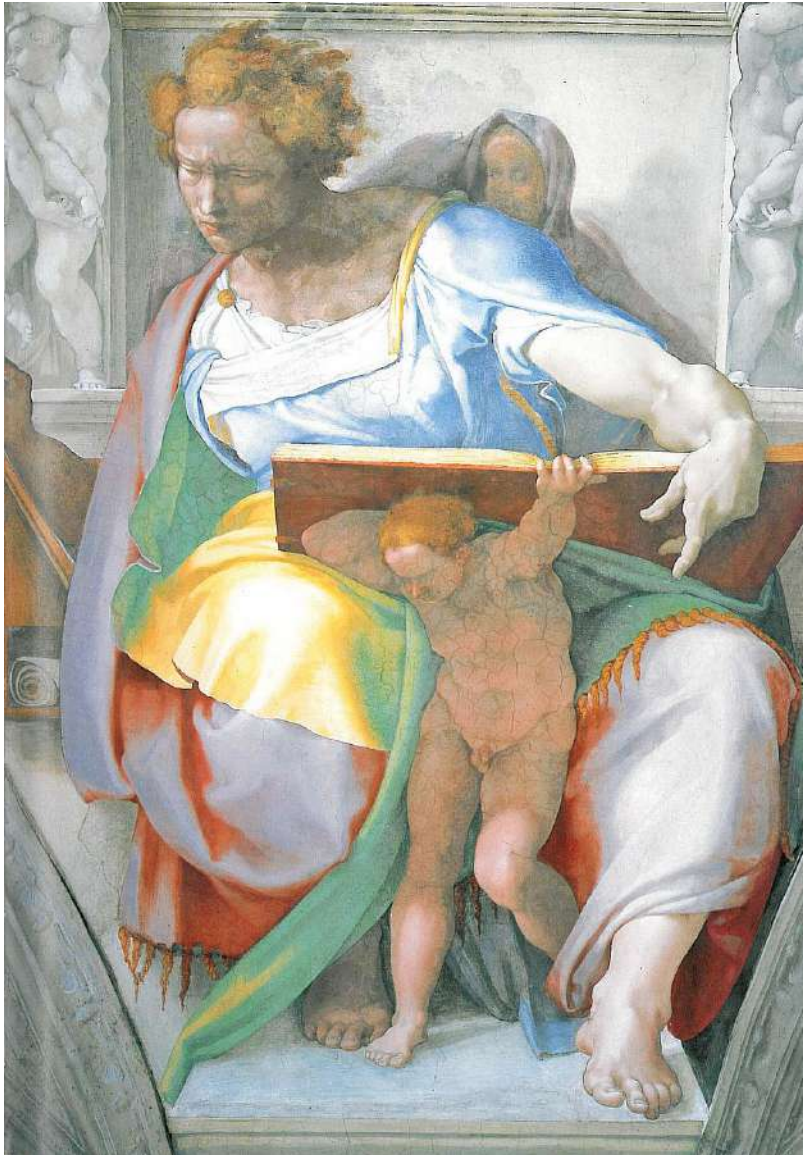
In contrast, God is a good shepherd: “I will seek that which was lost. And that which was driven away, I will bring again. I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak. And that which was fat and strong I will preserve, and I will feed them in judgment.” (Ez 34:16)

## CHAPTER 4 THE STORY OF DANIEL

(607 - 538 B.C.)

### Daniel at Nebuchadnezzar's Court

(Dan 1 - 2)



**Fig 3.4.1 The Prophet Daniel<sup>229</sup>**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

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<sup>229</sup> Daniel was a *prophet*, for even our Lord Jesus spoke of Daniel as a prophet (Matt 24:15).

Daniel and his three friends – Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah<sup>230</sup> – were among the young Jews brought to Babylon during the first deportation. They were selected as much for their good looks as for their wisdom. For they would be trained in the arts and language of the Chaldeans so that, after three years, they might serve in the palace of the king. (Dan 1:1-7)

One night Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had a terrifying dream. It troubled him so much that he forgot what he saw in the dream. He called all the wise men and magicians of Babylon to tell him what his dream was, and what it meant. But they said to him, “O king, tell us your dream, and we will tell you the meaning.” The king replied, “The dream is now gone out of my mind. Unless you tell me the dream and its meaning, you shall be put to death, and your houses confiscated.” (Dan 2:1-5)

“If you do not tell me the dream,” the king insisted, “then you are full of deceit. Tell me the dream, that I may know that you also give me a true interpretation.” But the magicians answered, “There is no man on earth – wise man, magician or Chaldean – who can accomplish your wish, O king.” In his anger the king commanded all the wise men of Babylon to be killed. When Arioch, the captain of the king’s guards, came to kill also Daniel and his friends, Daniel went to the king and asked him to give him time, so that he could give him the dream and its meaning. After this, Daniel went home and, together with his three friends, prayed to God for help, so that he and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. At night God revealed the mysterious dream to Daniel in a vision, and Daniel said, “Blessed be the name of the Lord from eternity and for evermore, for wisdom and fortitude are His.” Then Daniel told Arioch not to kill the wise men of Babylon, but to bring him instead to the king. (Dan 2:9-24)

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<sup>230</sup> Daniel and his friends were given new names in Babylon: Belteshazzar for Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah respectively. (Dan 1:7)

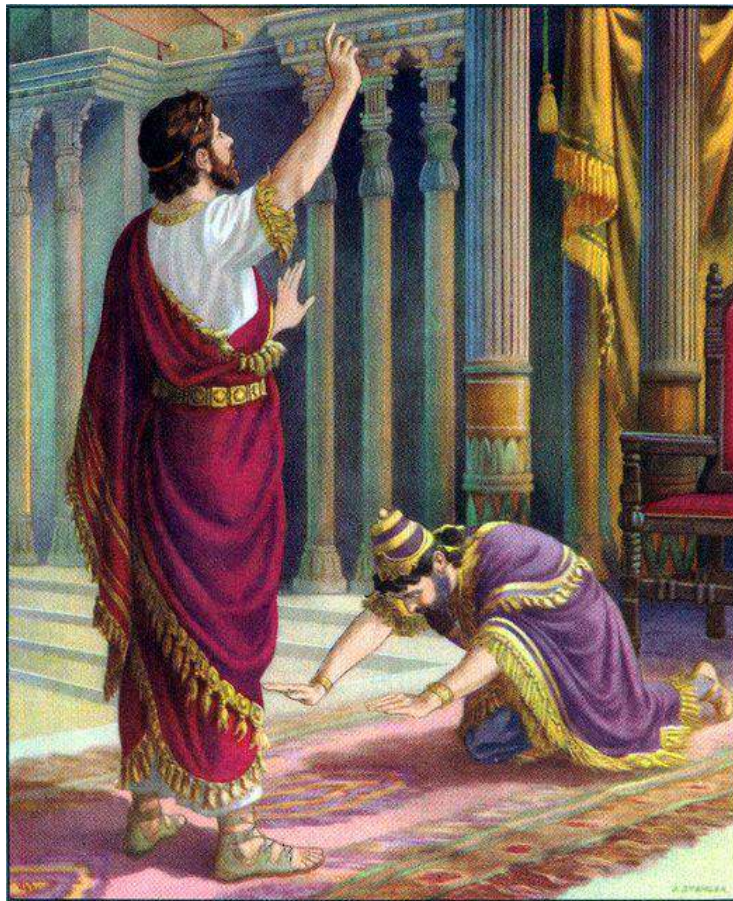


Daniel told the King, “You, O king, saw a great and tall statue. It looked terrible. Its head was of fine gold. Its breast and arms are of silver. Its belly and thighs are of brass. The legs are of iron, but the feet are part iron and part clay. Then, a stone cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands, struck the statue upon the feet which, because it was part iron and part clay, easily broke and caused the whole statue to collapse and to break into small pieces. The broken pieces were so small that they were like chaff on a threshing floor, and were easily carried by the wind, while the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain, and filled the earth.” (Dan 2:31-35)



**Fig 3.4.2 The Statue in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**  
CC BY NC ND 4.0 International License by Revelation TV

Daniel continued, “Your dream is about what will happen in the future. This is what the dream means. The golden head is your kingdom. It will be succeeded by an inferior kingdom, represented by the silver breast and arms. It will then be succeeded by a third kingdom, represented by the brass belly and thighs. And this again will be succeeded by a fourth kingdom, represented by the iron legs with composite clay/iron feet. In the end the God of heaven will set up a kingdom, represented by the stone cut out from a mountain and not by human hands, which shall break all the earthly kingdoms, but which itself shall never be destroyed.” (Dan 2:36-45)



**Fig 3.4.3 Nebuchadnezzar Acknowledges Daniel’s God as the True God**

Illustrators: O.A. Stemler and Bess Bruce Cleveland

Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and bowed to Daniel. He said to Daniel, “Truly your God is the God of gods.” Then he made Daniel governor over all the provinces of Babylon. (Dan 2:46-48)

## COMMENTARY

1. Nebuchadnezzar did not fully understand the significance of his dream because the events prophesied were, for him, future events. But he believed it and was satisfied because Daniel was able to tell him correctly what his dream was. He figured that if Daniel, with the help of his God, could tell him correctly what the dream was, then his interpretation of it would probably be correct as well.
2. For us the events prophesied are already past historical events and will have a fuller meaning. The first kingdom represented by the statue's golden head, was the kingdom of Babylon, as Daniel stated. The second kingdom, represented by the statue's silver breast and arms, was the kingdom of Persia, which conquered Babylon in 538 B.C. The third kingdom, represented by the brass belly and thighs of the statue, was the empire of Alexander the Great of Macedonia (Greece), because it won over the Persian Empire in 332 B.C. The fourth kingdom must be the Roman Empire, which took control of Alexander's empire in 146 B.C. The final kingdom, represented by the stone cut out of a mountain and not by human hands, is the spiritual kingdom of Christ, – the Catholic Church – which was not made by human hands, and which by grace will break the sins of the world, and which will never end.



## The Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace (Dan 3)

Once Nebuchadnezzar made a large golden statue which he ordered everyone to adore. Everyone obeyed, except Daniel's three friends – Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.<sup>231</sup> When their disobedience was reported to the him, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the three young men be cast into a very hot furnace. (Dan 3:1-20)



**Fig 3.4.4 Daniel's Friends in the Fiery Furnace**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

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<sup>231</sup> Daniel was not mentioned probably because he was not present. Otherwise, he probably would also refuse to worship the golden statue.

The furnace was heated exceedingly so that the men who cast Daniel's friends into the flame were themselves burned to death. The three young men walked in the middle of the flame, praising God and blessing the Lord. In particular, Azariah stood up, saying:

“Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our fathers.  
Your name is worthy of praise, and glorious forever.  
For You are just in all that You have done to us,  
And all Your works are true, and Your ways right...” (Dan 3:22-45)

Azariah and his companions remained unhurt. For, an angel of the Lord came down into the furnace and brought a cool wind that prevented the fire from touching them, and which made them unharmed inside the furnace (Dan 3:49-50). Then with one voice the three young men glorified God, saying:

“Blessed are You, O Lord the God of our fathers  
And worthy to be praised...  
Blessed is the holy name of Your glory...  
Blessed are You on the throne of Your kingdom,  
And exceedingly to be praised and exalted above all forever...  
All you works of the Lord, bless the Lord:  
*Praise and exalt him above all forever.*  
O you angels of the Lord, bless the Lord:  
*Praise and exalt him above all forever.*  
O you heavens, bless the Lord:  
*Praise and exalt him above all forever.*  
O all you waters that are above the heavens, bless the Lord:  
*Praise and exalt him above all forever.*  
O all you powers of the Lord, bless the Lord:  
*Praise and exalt him above all forever... ”* (Dan 3:49-90)

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and asked, “Did we not cast three men bound into the middle of the fire? Behold I see four men loose,<sup>232</sup> and the fourth is like the son of God.” He then came to the door of the fiery furnace and called them out. Immediately Azariah and his companions came out. All the nobles and great men of the king gathered together and saw the young men untouched by the fire, for not a hair of their head was burnt, nor their clothes damaged, nor did the smell of fire pass on them. (Dan 3:91-94)

Nebuchadnezzar therefore spoke and said, “Blessed be their God, who delivered his servants that believed in him... There is no other God that can save in this manner.” He decreed that no one should blaspheme against the God of the Jews, or they shall be destroyed and their houses laid waste. Then he promoted Azariah, Mishael and Hananiah in the provinces of Babylon. (Dan 3:95-97)

## COMMENTARY

1. Many historians of antiquity thought that the *Book of Daniel* contain many amazing accounts that belong more to folklore than to history. In particular, they did not believe that the Babylonians would engage in the practice of burning people alive until archaeologists excavated a cone-shaped structure in Babylon that looked like a firing kiln, along with a cuneiform inscription stating that the furnace was for burning people who blasphemed the gods of Chaldea. See *Highlights of Archaeology in Bible Lands*, p. 9

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<sup>232</sup> The fourth man was the angel who came down to help them.



## The Writing on the Wall

(Dan 5)

When Nebuchadnezzar died, Belshazzar became king of Babylon. Once he made a great feast for a thousand of his nobles. Being drunk he commanded that the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem be used at the feast. From these sacred vessels the king, his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank wine at the feast. Then a hand appeared, writing on the wall of the king's palace. After writing a few words, the hand disappeared. Upon seeing the hand, the king's face changed and he trembled with fear, his knees striking one against the other. He called all the wise men of Babylon and said, "Whoever can tell me the meaning of these words shall be clothed with purple, and shall have a golden chain on his neck, and shall be the third man in my kingdom." (Dan 5:1-7)



**Fig 3.4.5 Belshazzar's Feast**

Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn (1606-1669)

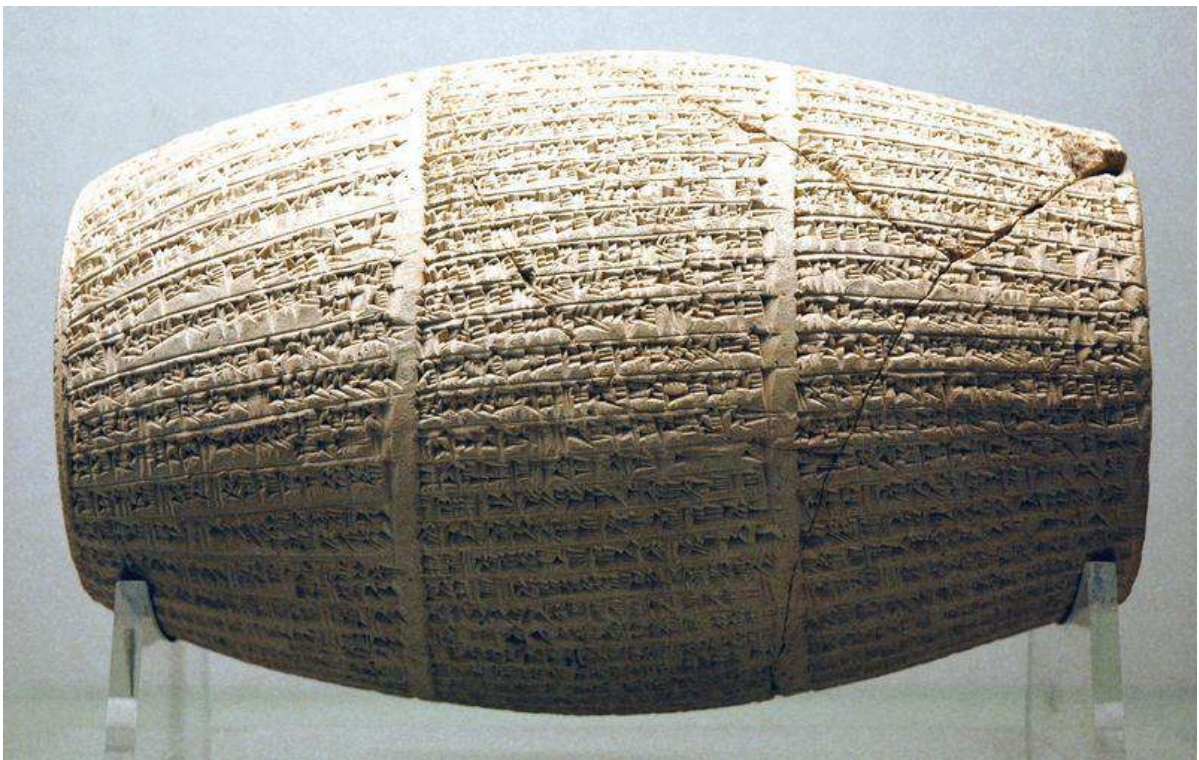
All the king's wise men came, but no one could interpret the writing. Then the queen came into the banquet house. She advised King Belshazzar to consult Daniel, just as Nebuchadnezzar had done. Daniel was called in, and the king offered him the same promise that he had made to the other wise men, if he could interpret the writing on the wall. (Dan 5:8-16)

Daniel said in reply, "Keep the rewards to yourself, and the gifts of your house to another. But I will read for you what is written on the wall, and give you its meaning. O king, the most high God gave to Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, greatness, glory and honor... But his heart became too proud, so God took away the throne from him and his glory was taken away. Now, you, Belshazzar, have not been humble either. You have lifted yourself against the Lord of Heaven, and have used the holy vessels of His temple in your feasting. Therefore, this is what is written on the wall: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. This is the meaning. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and has brought it to an end. TEKEL: You are weighed in the balance, and are found deficient. PARSIN: Your kingdom is divided, and is given to the Medes and Persians. (Dan 5:17-28)

By the king's command Daniel was clothed with purple, and a gold chain was put about his neck. And it was proclaimed that he had power as the third man in the kingdom. That night the king was slain. (Dan 5:29-30)

## COMMENTARY

1. This story shows how God punishes those who are guilty of sacrilege, or who profane things that are consecrated to the service of God.
2. At one time the historicity of Belshazzar was doubted by historians because the name “Belshazzar” was not found in the list of Babylonian kings. However, an inscription found in an artifact, known as the “Nabonidus Cylinder,” identified Belshazzar as King Nabonidus’ firstborn son (See picture below).



**Fig 3.4.6 The Nabonidus Cylinder**  
Photo Marco Prins and Jona Lendering

This means that Belshazzar was a real person, a crowned prince of Babylon, not a fictitious character in Daniel’s account. The reason that Daniel spoke of him as “Belshazzar the king” (Dan 5:1) was because the eccentric King Nabonidus, without resigning his position as King, entrusted the office of kingship to his son when he moved to Teima (northern Arabia). So, during his absence and until the fall of the kingdom, the king was officially Nabonidus, but effectively or in practice it was his son Belshazzar.



## Daniel in the Lions' Den

(Dan 6)

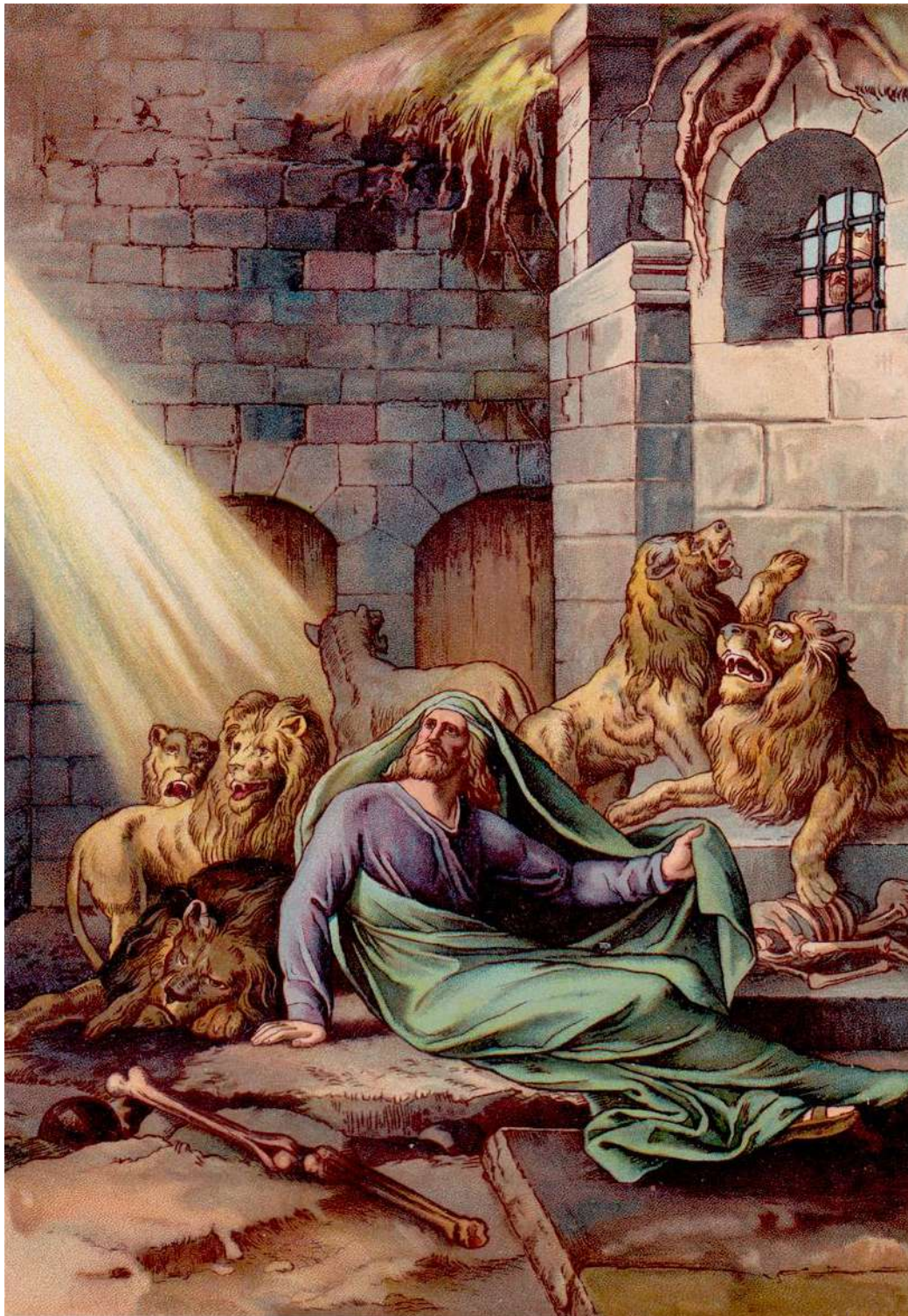
After the death of Belshazzar (ca. 538 B.C.), Darius the Mede became king of Babylon.<sup>233</sup> Like Nebuchadnezzar, he was so pleased with Daniel that he had also set him in charge over the entire kingdom. (Dan 6:1-4)

Out of jealousy the other princes and governors in Babylon tried to find a reason to complain against Daniel concerning the kingdom. Unable to find a cause, fault or reason for complaint against Daniel, they craftily suggested to the king to make a decree that whoever shall ask any petition for thirty days to any god or man other than the king, shall be cast into the den of lions. “Now, therefore, O king,” they said, “confirm the sentence and sign the decree, that it might become a law that cannot be changed.” (Dan 6:6-9)

Although Daniel knew that this law was made, he still went into his house and, opening the windows in his upper room toward Jerusalem, he knelt down three times a day to adore and give thanks to God, as he had been accustomed to do. The men carefully observed Daniel praying and making supplication to God. Then they went to the king and reported that Daniel had been violating his decree. The king was very much grieved and, though he wanted to save Daniel, the men reminded him that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no decree which the king has made, may be altered. So, the king commanded, and they cast Daniel into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, “Your God, whom you always served will save you.”

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<sup>233</sup> Darius the Mede ruled the Neo-Babylonian Empire after the fall of Babylon in 538 B.C. Although the man who actually led the conquest of Babylon was Cyrus the Great of Persia, Cyrus probably shared his power to the Medes and allowed his uncle, Darius the Mede, to *nominally* reign as king of Babylon until his death in 537 B.C. Cyrus continued to retain the real power in the whole empire. Although his name was not mentioned by Herodotus and other historians, Darius was probably the same person as the Median king Cyaxares II, whom the Greek historian, Xenophon, cited in his book *Cyropaedia*. Cyaxares II was the brother of Mandane, the mother of Cyrus the Great.



**Fig 3.4.7 Daniel in the Lions' Den**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

The king went to bed without taking supper. He couldn't sleep. Then rising early in the morning, he hurriedly went to the lions' den and said, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you always served, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O king, live forever. My God had sent his angel and shut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me because before you, O king, I have done no offence." The king was exceedingly glad for him. He commanded that Daniel be taken out of the den, and that those men who had accused Daniel be cast with their families into the lions' den. They did not even reach the bottom of the den when the lions caught them and broke their bones in pieces. (Dan 6:18-24)

Then King Darius wrote a letter to all people: "Peace be multiplied to you. It is decreed by me, that in all my empire and my kingdom all men shall dread and fear the God of Daniel. For He is the living and eternal God forever, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed, and His power shall be forever."<sup>234</sup> (Dan 6:25-26)

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<sup>234</sup> This story gives the *first time* that Daniel was cast into the lions' den. He stayed in the lions' den for only one night. There was a *second time* that Daniel was cast into the lions' den, where he stayed in the den for six days. The second episode happened during the time when Cyrus the Great took over the kingship of Persia, after the death of King Darius. An angry mob demanded of Cyrus that Daniel be cast into the lions' den, because Daniel exposed the fraud of their idol Bel and also because he had killed the dragon that they worshipped. See Dan 14.



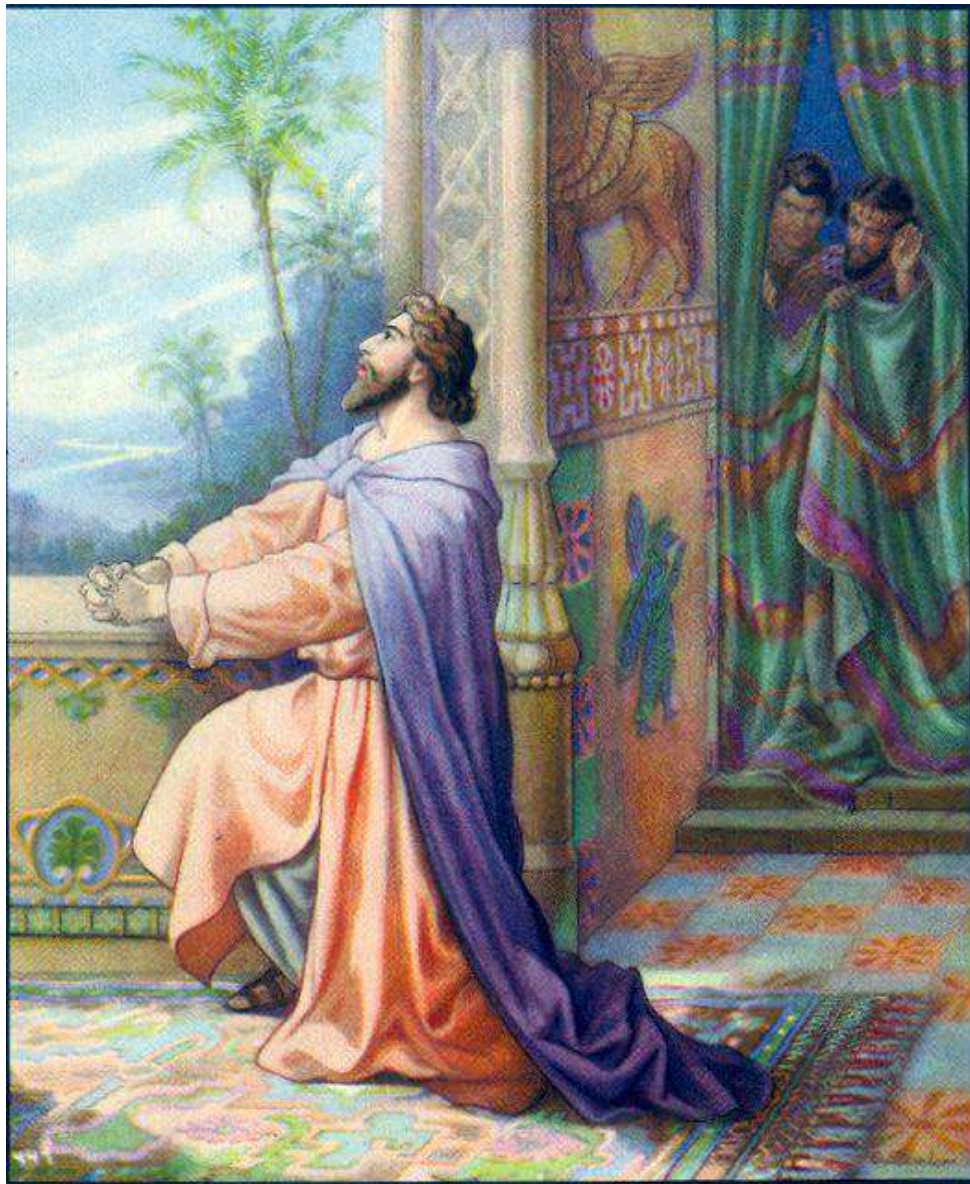
## COMMENTARY

1. Daniel in the lions' den was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Daniel was accused by other princes and governors out of envy, Christ was also accused by other religious leaders out of envy. The king did not really want Daniel to be cast into the lions' den, but did it anyway to please the people. In like manner, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, did not want to give a death sentence to Christ, but gave it anyway to please the people. As Daniel came out of the lions' den with his body whole and intact, Christ rose from the tomb glorious and immortal.
2. The lion's den is another item in the book of Daniel that had been viewed with much skepticism by some scholars. Of course, archaeology cannot prove the miracle of hungry lions being tamed in the presence of a prophet, but archaeology has now established the fact that Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians hunted lions and, if so, they must have made some place to keep them. The so-called "lions' den" did not have to be a special building or structure, for it could have been just a deep, open pit on the ground (Nah 2:11-12). That animals were used to execute enemies of the king was not really difficult to believe, because the Romans did the same to the early Christians in New Testament times.

## Daniel's Prophecy

(Daniel 9)

As Jeremiah made a prophecy that the Jews would serve the Babylonians for seventy years, Daniel also made a prophecy that was even more important. More important because the prophecy predicted the time when our Savior Jesus Christ would be slain to redeem us from our sins. In his book he wrote a vision that he experienced while he was praying.



**Fig 3.4.8 Daniel at Prayer**

Illustrators: O.A. Stemler (1872-1953)

He said that the angel Gabriel appeared to him in the form of a man and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to teach you, that you might understand... Seventy weeks are shortened upon your people and upon your holy city, that transgression may be finished, sin may have an end... and the Saint of saints may be anointed. Know, therefore, and take notice, that *from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem unto Christ the prince, there shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks...*” (Dan 9:22-25).

### COMMENTARY

1. The Hebrew word *shabua*, which is loosely translated into English as “week,” actually means seven *years*, not days. So, the death of Christ, which will put an end to sin (or which will accomplish our redemption from sin), was predicted at  $7+62 = 69$  weeks of years, or  $69 \times 7 = 483$  years *from the time the order to restore Jerusalem was issued*. However, the prophetic year in the Bible was an exact 360 days, not 365 days. Therefore, the predicted time of Christ’s death was  $483 \times 360 = 173,880$  days, or equivalently,  $173,880/365 = 476$  solar years.
2. Cyrus the Great allowed the Jews to return to their home country in 538 B.C. But the order to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple, which were both destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, was actually given to Nehemiah (Neh 2:1-8) in 444 B.C., which was the twentieth year of the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes I. Adding 476 years to 444 B.C., and noting that there is only one year difference between A.D. 1 and 1 B.C., the year of Christ’s death would fall at A.D. 33 by Daniel’s prediction.



## Daniel Saves Susanna

(Daniel 13)

There was a very rich man that lived in Babylon whose name was Joakim. He married a very beautiful, God-fearing woman, named Susanna. Joakim had a large garden near his house where people would often meet, because two of the elders who were appointed as judges that year would also be there to administer justice. After the meeting at noon, when the people had left, Susanna would walk in her husband's garden to walk, and the two elders had observed her doing this every day. (Dan 13:1-8)

Inflamed by lust toward her, the two old men agreed upon a time when they might find her alone in the garden. One day, when nobody else was there, they hid themselves in the garden and waited for Susanna. She came in at the usual time with two maids only. It was a hot day, so she decided to wash herself in the garden. She told the maids, "Bring me oil and washing balls, and shut the doors of the garden so that I may bathe." The maids did as they were told. They shut the doors of the garden and went out to get what she asked for. They did not know that the two old men were hiding inside. (Dan 13:14-18)

When the maids were gone, the two elders arose and ran to her, saying, "Behold, the doors of the garden are shut and nobody sees us. Consent to sin with us, or else we shall testify against you that a young man was with you, which is why you sent away your maids from you." Susanna sighed and said, "I am trapped on both sides. If I do what you ask, it is death for me before God. And if I refuse, I will not escape your hands. But it is better for me to be convicted without sin, than to sin in the sight of the Lord." With that Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the elders, too, cried out against her. Then one of them ran to open the door of the garden. (Dan 13:19-24)



**Fig 3.4.9 Susanna and the Elders**

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

When the servants of the house heard the cry, they rushed in to see what was the matter. The two old men accused Susanna of being unfaithful to her husband. The servants were greatly ashamed, for never had there been any such word said of Susanna. The next day the people, including Susanna's parents, children, and her relatives gathered before Joakim her husband. The wicked old men said that they caught Susanna committing sin with a young man in the garden. The people believed them because they were elders and judges of the people. The elders condemned her to death,<sup>235</sup> and Susanna prayed to God. (Dan13:26-43)

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<sup>235</sup> By the law of Moses the penalty for adultery was death (Lev 20:10).



**Fig 3.4.10 Daniel Proves Susanna Innocent**

Artist: François Pascal Simon Gérard (1770-1837)

God heard Susanna's prayer. When she was about to be put to death, He raised the spirit of young Daniel to intervene.<sup>236</sup> Crying with a loud voice, Daniel called for the two old men to be separated far from each other, for he wanted to examine them separately. (Dan 13:44-51)

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<sup>236</sup> Although this story was given in a later chapter (Ch. 13), the episode probably happened when Nebuchadnezzar was still living. For Daniel was described as "a young boy" when he saved Susanna (Dan 13:45). Chapter 13 does not follow the chronological sequence of the *Book of Daniel* because it was only appended to the book, and was not part of the original writing.



When the two witnesses were separated, Daniel asked the first one, “If you saw Susanna, under what tree did you see her and the young man conversing together?” The old man answered, “Under a mastic tree.” Then Daniel went to the second old man and asked the same question: “If you saw Susanna, under what tree did you see her and the young man conversing together?” The second old man answered, “Under a holm tree.” With that Daniel was able to expose the dishonesty of the two witnesses, for they had given conflicting testimony of the same event. The assembly cried out with a loud voice and rose up against the two elders, and from that day Daniel became great in the sight of the people. (Dan 13:52-64)

## Bel and the Dragon

(Daniel 14)

When Cyrus the Great took control of Babylon, he also honored Daniel above all his friends, and frequently invited him as guest to his table. Now the Babylonians had an idol Bel whom even Cyrus the king adored. Every day they would bring in twelve measures of fine flour and forty sheep for Bel to eat, and sixty vessels of wine for Bel to drink. (Dan 14:1-3)



**Fig 3.4.11 The Idol Bel**  
Artist: Evelyn Paul, 1916

The king asked Daniel, “Why do you not adore Bel?” Daniel replied, “I do not worship idols made by human hands, but only the living God who created heaven and earth.” The King then said to Daniel, “Does not Bel seem to be a living God? Don’t you see how much he eats and drinks every day?” Daniel smiled and said, “O king, don’t be deceived. This statue is only clay inside and brass outside; nor could it eat at any time.” The king called the priests who serve Bel and said to them, “If you don’t tell me who is eating up all these foods, you shall die. But if you can show that Bel is eating the food, then Daniel shall die, for he blasphemed against Bel.” (Dan 14:3-8)

The king went with Daniel to Bel’s temple. The priests said to them, “Behold we are leaving now. You, O king, set the meats on the table and make the wine ready. Then shut the door fast and seal it with your ring. When you come in the morning and did not find that Bel had eaten everything, then we will suffer death; otherwise, Daniel lied against us.” So, when the priests had left, the king set the meats before Bel, while Daniel commanded his servants to bring ashes, and he sifted them all over the temple before the king. Then they shut the door, sealed it with the king’s ring, and left. But the priests, with their wives and their children, came in at night by a secret door under the table, and they ate and drank all the food. (Dan 14:9-14)

Daniel and the king went to the temple early in the morning and found the door seals unbroken. Daniel opened the door and the king saw that the table was empty. He cried out with a loud voice, “Great art thou, O Bel, and there is not a deceit with thee.” Daniel laughed and held the king from going into the temple. He pointed to the footprints on the pavement and said, “Whose footsteps are these?” The king answered, “I see footsteps of men, women and children.” They followed the footsteps and discovered the secret door by which the priests and their families came to eat everything on the table. The king therefore put the priests and their families to death, and let Daniel destroy the idol Bel and his temple. (Dan 14:15-21)



There was also a dragon in that place which the Babylonians worshipped. “Now,” said the king to Daniel, “you cannot say that this is not a living god. Therefore, adore him.” Daniel replied, “I adore the Lord my God, for He is the living God; but that is no living god. Allow me, O king, and I will kill this dragon without sword or club.” The king said, “You may do so.” (Dan 14:22-25)



**Fig 3.4.12 Daniel Feeds and Kills the Dragon**

Artist: Jacob Willemsz de Wet or Wett (1632-1675)

Daniel took pitch, fat and hair, and boiled them together into lumps. He then put the lumps into the dragon's mouth, and the dragon exploded. "Behold him whom you worshipped," Daniel said. The Babylonians became very angry, first, because Daniel had exposed the fraud of their idol Bel and, second, he had killed the dragon that they worshipped. They therefore went to the king and said, "Deliver Daniel to us, or else we will destroy you and your house." Seeing how furious they were, the king was forced by necessity to hand Daniel to them. The Babylonians cast Daniel into the den of lions, and he was there six days. (Dan 14:26-30)

This was the second time that Daniel had been cast into the lions' den. But this time the Babylonians purposely starved the lions to make sure that they would devour him. The lions did not hurt Daniel, but he was very hungry for being in the den six days without food. Now in Judea the prophet Habakkuk had boiled pottage and broken bread in a bowl. He was going to carry it to the reapers in the field, but the angel of the Lord stopped him and said, "Carry the dinner which you have into Babylon, to Daniel, who is in the lions' den." Habakkuk replied, "Lord, I have never been to Babylon, nor do I know the den." The angel of the Lord took him and carried him by the hair of his head, and brought him to Babylon, over the den. (Dan 14:31-35)

Habakkuk said "O Daniel, you servant of God, take the dinner that God has sent you." Daniel said, "You remembered me, O God, and you have not forsaken them that love you." Daniel arose, and ate. And the angel of the Lord brought Habakkuk back to his own place. On the seventh day, when Cyrus found out that Daniel was still alive, he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Great are You, O Lord, the God of Daniel." Then he set Daniel free and cast Daniel's enemies into the den, where they were immediately devoured by the starving lions. Then he said, "Let everyone fear the God of Daniel, for He is the Savior, working signs and wonders." (Dan 14:36-42)



**Fig 3.4.13 The Angel Takes Habakkuk by the Hair to Bring Food to Daniel**

Artist: Jacopo Guarana (1720-1808)



## COMMENTARY

1. Chapters 13 (The story of Susanna) and 14 (Bel and the Dragon) of the *Book of Daniel* are missing in Protestant Bibles because they were not in the original Hebrew Bible. Protestants want to include in their Bible only those books that were in the original Hebrew Bible. However, the Catholic Church considers these texts as “inspired” writings and, therefore, legitimately parts of the Bible because they were in the Greek version of the Bible, called the *Septuagint*, which the Apostles used when they preached to the Greek-speaking pagan world.
2. Were dragons real? Yes, if the word “dragon” is understood correctly. In antiquity the word “dragon” is often used to refer to any huge serpent-like or lizard-like creature. So, any large serpent, such as a python or a *boa constrictor*, would be called a “dragon.” Unusually large snakes that swim on water (sea monsters) or on air would also be called “dragons.” In fact, the *Leviathan* (the giant twisting serpent in Isa 27:1) was called a “dragon” in some Bible translations. It was also in this sense that Pliny, in his book *Natural History* (Book VIII, Ch. 11-13), described the dragon as a real animal.
3. Don’t dragons have wings? That is how most people understand them today, which is why they think that dragons are mythical. But this does not mean that there aren’t any flying serpents and flying lizards. The prophet Isaiah spoke of flying serpents twice, in Isa 14:29 and 30:6. These may not be winged serpents, but they could travel by air. Even today there are real snakes and real lizards that could fly. In particular, the lizard *draco volans* is able to extend the folds in its body to make “wings” for gliding through the air. See [9 Incredible Lizards That Look Like Dragons](#). The dragon in the story of “Mel and the Dragon” is not as fanciful as it sounds. For God had created small snakes and large snakes, small lizards and large lizards. Therefore, it is not impossible that a large flying reptile existed in the past that might correspond to our modern idea of a “dragon.”
4. Don’t dragons spit fire from their mouths? There are animals that emit fire from their bodies, but the idea that dragons spit fire from their mouths is probably artistic imagery, due to the fact that their venom makes you feel very hot when you get bit by them. This might be the case with the “fiery serpents” in Num 21:6.

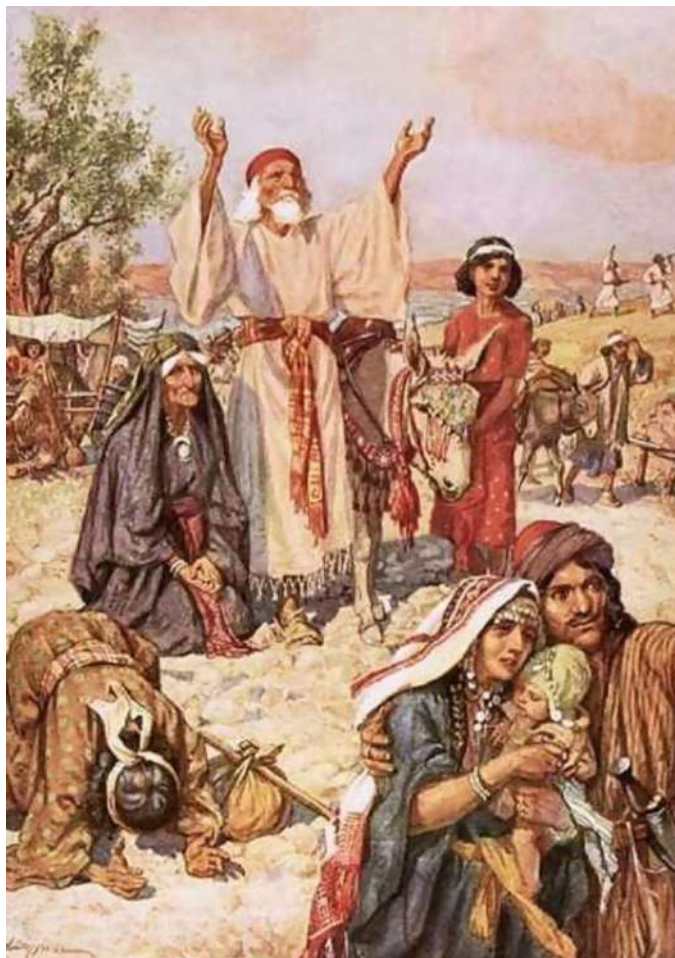
## CHAPTER 5 THE JEWS UNDER PERSIAN RULE

### (538 – 332 B.C.)

### Return from Captivity

(Ezr 1 - 6)

When Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon in 538 B.C., he made a proclamation that the Jews could now return to their own country and rebuild the temple that the Babylonians destroyed. This ended the so-called *Babylonian Captivity*. To help them in the reconstruction of their temple, Cyrus returned the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the temple. (Ezr 1)



**Fig 3.5.1 The Return of the Exiles**  
Artist: William Brassey Hole (1846-1917)

Zerubbabel,<sup>237</sup> a Prince of the house of David, led over 42,000 exiles plus over 7000 servants back to Jerusalem.<sup>238</sup> (Ezr 2)

When they came to Jerusalem, the Jews built a temporary altar, so that they might offer holocausts upon it until the temple could be finished. Then they started building a new temple in the same place where the temple of Solomon used to stand. After laying down the foundation of the new temple, they sang hymns and praised the Lord. But many of the priests and the ancients, who had seen the former temple, wept with a loud voice. (Ezr 3)

When the Samaritans<sup>239</sup> in Judea saw what the Jews were doing, they strove to stop the work by writing a misleading letter to the king of Persia. Ahasuerus,<sup>240</sup> the new king who succeeded Cyrus, stopped the work, and the reconstruction of the temple ceased until the reign of Darius I.<sup>241</sup> (Ezr 4)

The prophets **Haggai** and **Zechariah** prophesied. Haggai reproved the people for stopping the reconstruction of the temple, and exhorted them to continue the work (Hg 1). So, Zerubbabel and the high priest Jeshua resumed the work. With help from friends, they wrote a letter to Darius, requesting him to verify that the rebuilding of the temple was a legitimate endeavor because the order came from no less than Cyrus the Great himself. (Ezr 5)

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<sup>237</sup> Zerubbabel happens to be one of Christ's ancestors, too. (Matt 1:12; Luke 3:27).

<sup>238</sup> These numbers do not represent all, but it is a big fraction of the Jews then living in Babylon. Some of the Jews became so comfortable with their life in Babylon that they decided to stay. Daniel, because of his age (90+) and high position in Babylon, also stayed. We know this because some of Daniel's experiences described in the *Book of Daniel*, including the story of Bel and the Dragon, happened more than three years already after Cyrus' proclamation was given.

<sup>239</sup> These were the idolatrous people who inhabited the land once occupied by the northern kingdom of Israel. They consisted of Assyrians and other strangers who intermarried with the Jews who remained in northern Israel after their fellow Israelites were carried off as captives into Assyria.

<sup>240</sup> Ahasuerus (aka Artaxerxes in Ezr 4:7) in the Bible is also known in Persian records by the name of Cambyses II.

<sup>241</sup> Darius I of Persia should not be confused with Darius the Mede, who was the first king of Babylon after it fell into the hands of the Persians.



After investigating the matter, Darius ordered the reconstruction of the temple to proceed. After approximately twenty years since they left Babylon, the Jews completed the temple. Then it was dedicated to God (ca. 516 B.C.) with much rejoicing. (Ezr 6).



**Fig 3.5.2 Model of the Second Temple**

Model in the Israel Museum, by Arieli. CC BY 3.0

Some of the ancients, who remembered the first temple (or the temple of Solomon), lamented because the new temple, also called the second temple, was not as impressive. But the prophet Haggai consoled them, saying that the new temple would be a more glorious one than the former temple, because the “Desired of all nations”<sup>242</sup> (Christ, the Messiah) would one day enter it<sup>243</sup> (Hg 2:7-10).

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<sup>242</sup> Newer translations of the Bible render this phrase as “the *wealth* of all nations,” and miss the point of the prophecy. Christ is the desired wealth and treasure that will make the new temple more glorious.

<sup>243</sup> This prophecy was fulfilled because Christ went in and taught in this temple (Luke 2:41-52; Matt 21:23; John 8:2). Incidentally, this temple was renovated and expanded by Herod the Great in 20 B.C. and became known as Herod’s Temple. It was Herod’s Temple that was standing during the time of Christ, and which He predicted would be destroyed by the Romans.

## COMMENTARY

1. The Jews were not merely reconstructing the temple, but they were also building homes and reconstructing their city. It was a lot of work for them because not all the Jews returned to Jerusalem. Many remained in Babylon. But, just as the prophet Haggai had a consoling word for the ancients because the new temple was less magnificent than the original temple of Solomon, so the prophet Zachariah had a consoling word for the many Jews who rebuilt Jerusalem. He said that one day the King (Christ, the King of kings) would enter their poor city riding on a donkey (Zec 9:9). This prophecy was also fulfilled (Matt 21:4-9).
2. The Jews finished the construction of the temple, but the Ark was missing. Where was the Ark of the Covenant? It was the most important object in the temple of Solomon. It was missing since Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem in 587 B.C, for the Bible recorded that Nebuchadnezzar had stolen the vessels in the temple, but it never said that he also stole the Ark. We have a clue regarding the whereabouts of the Ark from the *Second Book of Maccabees*, which stated that before the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., the prophet Jeremiah took the Ark and the altar of incense, and hid them in a cave in the same mountain (Mount Nebo) where Moses saw the Promised Land. (2 Macc 2:4-10). We may presume that the Stone Tablets and Aaron's rod were there as well.
3. Jeremiah's companions marked the place where the Ark was kept, but they lost the marker. Jeremiah blamed them for it and said, "The place shall be unknown, till God gather together the congregation of the people, and receive them to mercy" (2 Macc 2:7). Indeed, the Ark has not been found to this date. Perhaps the Ark will not be seen again until the end-times, when the elect will be gathered together (Rev 4). In the *Book of Revelation*, it is also written: "the temple of God was opened in heaven: and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple, and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail" (Rev 11:19).
4. The Ark was a very important object in the temple, for it contained the *words* of the Covenant (the Commandments). The Jews regarded it as a sign of God's presence. Perhaps God permitted the Ark to be lost to pave the way for Christ. For the Ark of the Covenant was only a figure of the Tabernacle that would contain, not a sign, but the Real Presence of the **Word**, the Son of God.

## Ezra and Nehemiah

(Ezr 7-10; Neh 1-4, 6, 8)

During the reign of King Artaxerxes I,<sup>244</sup> **Ezra**, a holy priest, recruited a new group of Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to their home country. His purpose was to teach in Israel the commandments of God and His rulings. It was in 458 B.C., the seventh year of Artaxerxes I's reign, that Ezra went to Jerusalem. He went with the permission and full support of the king. In a written decree the king asked Ezra to carry all the silver and gold that he could find in the provinces of Babylon, that he might use them to buy the animals needed for the holocausts. He also gave him authority to appoint judges and magistrates to administer justice in Jerusalem. (Ezr 7)



**Fig 3.5.3 Ezra with the Gold Vessels**

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<sup>244</sup> Artaxerxes I reigned from 464-424 B.C., and was a different king from the earlier Artaxerxes cited in Ezr 4:7 (See the Commentary for a list of Persian kings.)



Jews from various families accompanied Ezra. Since there was already a temple in Jerusalem, priests, Levites and singers also went with Ezra. They brought the silver and gold, and the holy vessels into the temple. On their way to Jerusalem the governors of the province beyond the river also contributed their offerings to the Lord. (Ezr 8)

Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra mourned for the sins of the people, particularly for those of the Jews who married pagan wives. (Ezr 9) The Jews also repented of their sins, so Ezra made an order for the Jewish men to separate themselves from their foreign wives. (Ezr 10)

Thirteen years later, in 445 B.C., the pious **Nehemiah** in Babylon heard about the miserable condition of the Jews in Jerusalem, the sorry state of the city's defensive walls, and the gates that were burnt with fire. He grieved about this news, and fasted and prayed to God for help. (Neh 1)

Nehemiah was King Artaxerxes' cup-bearer. When Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah's gloomy face, he asked him for the reason for his sadness. Nehemiah then reported how Jerusalem was in a very poor condition, its graveyards were desolate, and the gates of the city burnt down. Artaxerxes therefore commissioned him to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city's walls and gates.<sup>245</sup> With a few men, Nehemiah proceeded to Jerusalem. The king gave him an escort of soldiers on his way to Jerusalem. (Neh 2)

Upon reaching Jerusalem, Nehemiah started to work. Many families in Judea came to help him build the walls and set up the gates around the city. Again, the Samaritans opposed their effort. But Nehemiah divided his men. Half of them continued the work on the walls, while the other half, armed with spears and swords, were assigned to guard their work, ready to fight the enemies. (Neh 3 and 4)

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<sup>245</sup> These were *defensive* walls. Without them Jerusalem would be vulnerable to attack by its enemies.  
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**Fig 3.5.4 Nehemiah Rebuilds Jerusalem's Walls**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

In 52 days, the repair<sup>246</sup> and strengthening of the walls were finished (Neh 6:15). The city was once again surrounded by strong walls that protected it against its enemies. After this, Nehemiah appointed watchmen in Jerusalem to guard the city. (Neh 6 and 7)

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<sup>246</sup> Since it only took less than two months to complete the project, Nehemiah probably did not build a brand new wall, but only repaired and strengthened the damaged wall.

While Nehemiah was busy rebuilding the walls of the city, Ezra was also busy rebuilding the faith of the people. One day the people requested Ezra the scribe<sup>247</sup> to bring the book of the law of Moses. He brought it out and read it to them from morning until midday. All the men and women, and all those that could understand, listened attentively. Ezra blessed the Lord, and all the people answered, “Amen, amen,” with their hands lifted up. Then they bowed down, and adored God with their faces on the ground. On the Feast of Tabernacles, they made tents and dwelt in them, a celebration that they had not done since the days of Joshua. During this time Ezra read the book of the law of God day by day, from the first day till the last. (Neh 8)

In addition to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, God also raised two other prophets who preached to the Jews in Jerusalem. The prophet **Malachi** preached during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. He rebuked the Jews for their ingratitude, and the priests for neglecting their covenant. He predicted that God would later reject their sacrifices, and in their place, there would be a New Sacrifice that would never cease, “from the rising of the sun even to the going down”<sup>248</sup> (Mal 1:11).

Another late prophet, **Joel** (ca. 400 B.C.), invited the Jews to repentance, and foretold the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit<sup>249</sup> (Joel 2:28-32).

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<sup>247</sup> Ezra was not only a priest, but also a *scribe* skilled in the law of Moses (Ezr 7:6). As a scribe it was his duty to keep, organize and make copies of the books of the prophets. Many people believe that it was actually Ezra who gathered all the books that had been written to form what is now known as the *Hebrew Bible*, and he used it to establish readings and Divine services in the temple. Ezra was also probably the author, not only of the books *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, but also of *First and Second Chronicles*.

<sup>248</sup> This prophecy was fulfilled when our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

<sup>249</sup> St. Peter claims that this prophecy refers to what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).



## COMMENTARY

1. The following list of Persian kings, based on Persian records, may help to remove the confusion regarding the names of the various kings of Persia cited in Holy Scripture.

### **The Kings of Persia** (Achaemenid Empire)

Cyrus the Great reigned in Persia from 559-530 B.C. He also reigned in Babylon after the death of his uncle, Darius the Mede, in 537 B.C.

Cambyses II (530-522) = Ahasuerus (in Ezr. 4:6) or Artaxerxes (in Ezr 4:7)

Bardiya (522)

Darius I (522-486)

Xerxes I (485-465). = Ahasuerus (in the *Book of Esther*)

Artaxerxes I (465-424)

Xerxes II (424)

Darius II (424-404)

Artaxerxes II (404-358)

Artaxerxes III (358-338)

Artaxerxes IV (338-336)

Darius III (336-330) - Defeated by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.

Artaxerxes V (330-329)

## Esther

(The Book of Esther)

The story of Ezra and Nehemiah tells the experiences of the Jews in Judea under the Persian rule after their return from Captivity. But there is one more story that speaks of a particular Jewish experience under the Persian rule, which happened neither in Judea nor in Babylon, but in Persia. This is the story of Esther, the girl who became queen of Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes I (485-465 B.C.). It happened in Susa, the capital of Persia, when many of the Jewish exiles had already returned to Judea, but way before Ezra went to Jerusalem.



**Fig 3.5.5 Queen Esther**

Artist: Hugues Merle (1823-1881)

Among the Jews who did not return to Jerusalem after the Captivity were Mordecai and Esther, the girl whom he had adopted as his own daughter. Esther was a beautiful and lovely woman, so much so that upon seeing her, Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, loved her and made her his queen. But she never told him that she was Jewish, because Mordecai instructed her to keep that secret. (Esth 2:5-10)

One day, while Mordecai was at the king's gate, two officials of the palace became angry and made plans to kill the king. Mordecai heard it, so he hurriedly told the plot to Esther, who in turn told the king. When the matter was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were put to death and this story was recorded in Persia's Chronicles in the presence of the king. (Esth 2:21-23)

After this, the king promoted Haman to a position above all the princes that were with him. The king commanded that everyone at the doors of the palace should bend their knees and bow before Haman. But Mordecai refused to bend his knee nor bow before Haman.<sup>250</sup> When Haman heard this, and learned that Mordecai refused to bow because he was Jewish, he became so angry that he resolved to destroy not merely Mordecai, but all the Jews in Ahasuerus' kingdom. (Esth 3:1-6)

To accomplish his goal better, Haman told the king that there were people in the kingdom – the Jews – who used different laws and ceremonies, and who despised the king's ordinances. He therefore suggested to the king to make a decree to destroy all the Jews, young and old, little children and women, in one day, and to confiscate all their properties to the crown. The decree was published, leaving all the Jews in Susa weeping. (Esth 3:8-15)

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<sup>250</sup> As a Jew, Mordecai knew that he should give that kind of honor to God alone.



Through one of Esther's attendants, Mordecai advised Esther to plead before the king for her fellow Jews. But there was a law forbidding anyone from approaching the king unless called. The penalty for breaking this law was death, except if the king held out his golden scepter toward the intruder as a token of clemency. Anyway, Esther sent a message to Mordecai, saying, "Gather the Jews together and pray for me. Let everybody fast for three days, and I with my handmaids will do the same.<sup>251</sup> After three days, without being called by the king, I will risk my life and approach the king." (Esth 4)



**Fig 3.5.6 Esther before the King**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

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<sup>251</sup> Prayer is more effective when accompanied by fasting.

On the third day Queen Esther put on her royal clothes and went to the king. He was pleased to see her, so he held out the golden scepter toward her, indicating that he forgives her intrusion. She drew near and kissed the top of his scepter. “What is your wish?” asked the king. Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, I invite you and Haman to attend the banquet that I have prepared. And tomorrow at the banquet I will tell you my wish.” The king promised Esther that he and Haman would both go. (Esth 5:1-8)

That night the king could not sleep. So, he commanded his servants to read some stories of the kingdom from the Chronicles. The servants came to the part which tells the story of how Mordecai saved the king’s life from the two officials who sought to kill the king. “What reward did Mordecai receive for his loyalty,” the king asked his servants. They said, “He received no reward at all.”<sup>252</sup> (Esth 6:1-3)

Just then Haman came in to the king’s court. The king asked him, “What should be done to a man whom the king desires to honor?” Thinking that the king had no thought of honoring anyone but himself, Haman answered, “He should be clothed with the king’s apparel, and be set upon the king’s horse, and have the royal crown upon his head. Let the first of the princes hold his horse, and lead the horse through the city, proclaiming, “Thus shall he be honored, whom the king wishes to honor.” The king said to Haman, “Quickly, take my robe and my horse, and do the honor that you have just described to Mordecai the Jew.” (Esth 6:4-10)

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<sup>252</sup> Actually, Mordecai received some present (Esth 12:5), but it was of so little value that in the eyes of the servants it amounted to almost nothing.

Haman obeyed and gave honor to Mordecai in the streets of the city, but afterward he mourned and told his wife what happened. Then the king's servants summoned him to the banquet. (Esth 6:11-14)

At the banquet the king again asked Esther, "What is your wish? Even if you ask half of my kingdom, you shall have it." Then she answered, "O king, if it pleases you, save my life and the lives of my people. For I and my people are about to be slain by an enemy whose cruelty will be blamed upon the king. For, by his false pretenses, the enemy persuaded the king to issue a decree to destroy us." Ahasuerus asked who was responsible for this treacherous scheme. Then Esther said, "It is this Haman, our most wicked enemy." (Esth 7:1-6)



**Fig 3.5.7 Esther Denounces Haman**

Artist: Ernest Normand (1857-1923)



Being angry, the king rose up, went into the garden set with trees, and came back. One of the servants reported to him, “Behold, Haman has prepared a gibbet on which to hang Mordecai.” The king replied, “Hang Haman upon it.” This was done, and the king’s wrath ceased. (Esth 7:7-10)

Esther revealed to the king that Mordecai was her uncle. The king promoted Mordecai and invested him with Haman’s authority. The order against the Jews was revoked, and the Jews were saved. People of other nations and religion abandoned their idols and joined the Jews in their worship and ceremonies. (Esth 8:1-17)

## COMMENTARY

1. Esther was a figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For, as she pleads with King Ahasuerus for the Jewish people, the Blessed Virgin intercedes for us with Almighty God. As Esther was exempted from the king’s strict law, the Virgin Mary was exempted from the stain of original sin. As Esther saved the Jews from destruction, the Virgin Mary, by her compassionate suffering with her Divine Son, is rightfully called Christ’s co-redeemer of the world.
2. Mordecai was also a type of St. Joseph. For, as Mordecai was the faithful guardian of Esther, St. Joseph was the guardian of the Virgin Mary and of our Savior Jesus Christ. As Mordecai served the Queen of Persia, St. Joseph served the Queen of Heaven.

## CHAPTER 6 THE JEWS UNDER OTHER FOREIGN RULERS

(332 - 63 B.C.)

### Greece, Egypt, Syria

(1 Macc 1)

The Jews lived in peace for about two hundred years under the rule of the Persian kings. But in 332 B.C. the Persians lost their power to Alexander the Great of Macedonia (Greece), so the Jews fell under Greek rule. Meanwhile, Alexander continued to expand his empire, and conquered many other lands and nations. (1 Macc 1:1-4)

Before he died in 323 B.C. Alexander called his four generals and divided his empire between them (1 Macc 1:6-8). The Kingdom of Judah fell under the control of one of the generals of the empire, who happened to be Ptolemy, the King of Egypt. This was how the Egyptians ruled over Judah for about one hundred twenty-five years, from 323-198 B.C.<sup>253</sup>

In 198 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, King of Syria, conquered Egypt.<sup>254</sup> Thus Judah also fell under the control of the kings of Syria. But Antiochus was a cruel king. He persecuted the Jews, desecrated the temple (ca. 168 B.C.), and forced them to abandon their religion and to engage in strange cults. Many people, misled by lawless men from Israel, obeyed Antiochus, but there were also many who refused to obey the king. They valiantly resisted the king's orders, and preferred death to sin. (1 Macc 1:16-64)

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<sup>253</sup> It was one of the Egyptian kings who later requested the high-priest in Jerusalem to work on a Greek translation of the Holy Scriptures. The result was the Greek Bible, known as the *Septuagint* (LXX). It was so-called because there were seventy-two learned men, well versed in both Hebrew and Greek, who undertook the work of translating the original Hebrew Bible into Greek.

<sup>254</sup> Antiochus IV was a member of the Seleucid dynasty because he was a successor of Seleucus I, who was one of Alexander's generals.

## Eleazar the Martyr

(2 Macc 6:18-31)

One of those who dared to disobey Antiochus was a 90-year-old man, named Eleazar. When Antiochus commanded him to eat pork, he refused because it was against the Jewish religion.<sup>255</sup> He would rather die than commit sin. His acquaintances, moved by wicked pity, advised him to bring and eat meats permitted by the Law, just to pretend that he obeyed the king's order. But Eleazar still refused, saying, "It is not right at my age to pretend. Because many young people would be deceived into thinking that I yielded through my weakness. I'd rather leave an example of fortitude to the youth." (2 Macc 6:18-25)



**Fig 3.6.1 The Martyrdom of Eleazar**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Lenardi (1656-1704)

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<sup>255</sup> The laws of Moses allowed eating only animals that both chew their cud and have cloven hooves. See Lev 11:2-8. Although pigs have cloven hooves, they do not chew their cud and, therefore, are considered "unclean animals."



The kindness of his acquaintances changed to wrath when they heard his words, because his words seemed to them to be arrogant. When he was ready to die, Eleazar said, “O Lord, you manifestly know that, although I suffer grievous pains in body, in soul I am well content to suffer these things, because I fear you.” Thus, Eleazar died, leaving to the young the memory of his death, an example of virtue and fortitude. (2 Macc 6:29-31)

### COMMENTARY

1. The advice given to Eleazar by his acquaintances was the result of “wicked pity,” as the Bible says. For, although his acquaintances showed him pity on account of his advanced age, they showed no pity for his soul, since the advice they gave him was to commit a sin of deception.
2. The advice given to Eleazar by his acquaintances might seem good. By the world’s standard it appears good because it works; and it could have saved Eleazar’s life. But God’s standard of value is not the same as the world’s standard. God does not measure the goodness of an act by its ability to produce practical results, but by its agreeableness to His Will. An act of deception does not conform to His holy Will and, therefore, is not really good.

## The Martyrdom of a Mother and Her Seven Sons

(2 Macc 7)

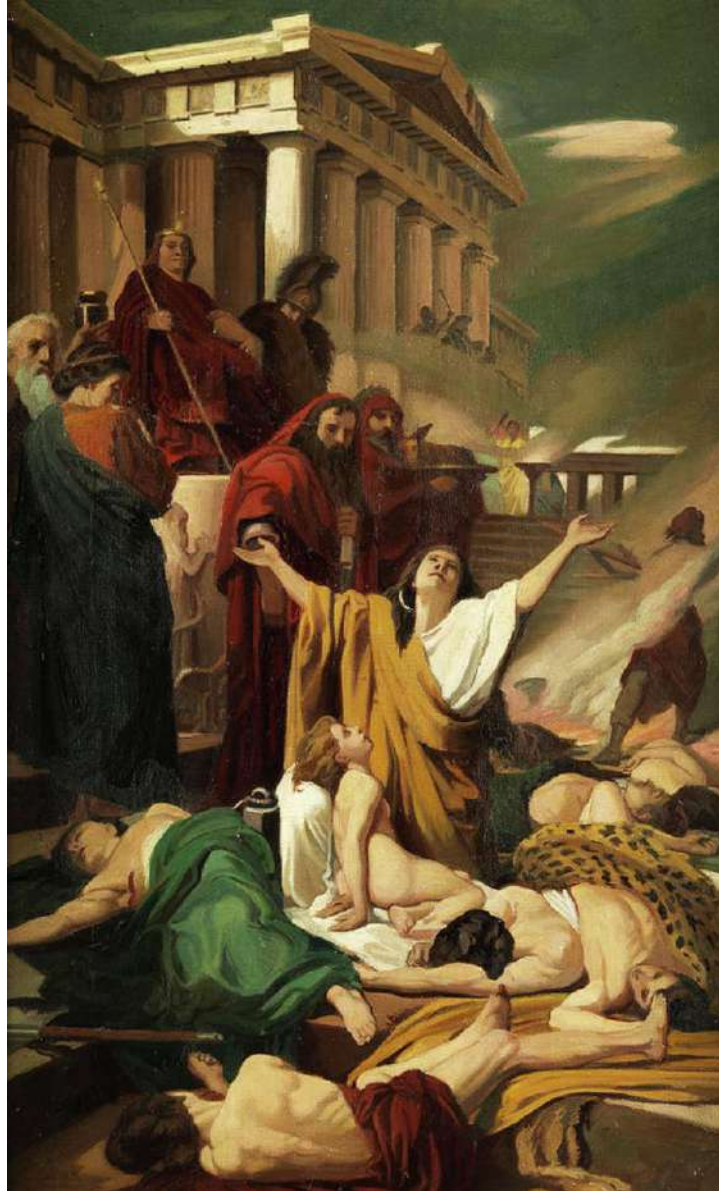
Like Eleazar, seven brothers and their mother were arrested and forced by King Antiochus to eat pork. One after the other, each one of the brothers was tortured by whips and scourges in the presence of the rest. But the eldest said, “We are ready to die rather than break the Laws of God.” After hearing this, the king became angry and ordered frying pans and brazen caldrons to be made hot. He then commanded the tongue of him who spoke first to be cut out, the skin of his head to be drawn off, and his fingers and toes to be chopped off. Finally, while his mother and brothers looked on, the eldest son was ordered to be fried alive in the frying pan. While he was suffering these torments, his brothers and his mother encouraged one another to die manfully. (2 Macc 7:1-6)

When the first was dead, they brought the second eldest son next. After pulling off the skin of his head, they asked him if he would eat pork. But he replied, “*You, indeed, destroy us out of this present life. But the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life.*”<sup>256</sup> For this answer the second son was tortured like the first. The third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth sons were all tortured in the same way, and all died valiantly rather than break God’s law. Because their mother, being filled with wisdom, bravely exhorted every one of them. (2 Macc 7:7-23)

Antiochus, thinking himself despised, promised the seventh son that he would make him a rich and happy man, and even offered him his friendship, if he would renounce the Jewish religion. He then exhorted the mother to counsel her youngest son and thereby save him. But the son said, “I will not obey the king, but the commandment given us by Moses.” (2 Macc 7:24-38)

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<sup>256</sup> Belief in the resurrection is evident in the son’s reply, but it can also be seen in the mother’s exhortations (2 Macc 7:22-23).



**Fig 3.6.2 Martyrdom of a Mother and Her Seven Sons<sup>257</sup>**

Artist: Antonio Ciseri (1821-1891)

Being incensed with anger, the king tormented the last son even more cruelly than the rest of his brothers. The mother, who had encouraged her sons to persevere with fortitude, was also put to death. (2 Macc 7:39-42)

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<sup>257</sup> The seven sons are often referred to as the “Seven Maccabees.” Actually the Bible did not give the name of the woman or the seven sons. But because the story is given in the Second Book of Maccabees, the martyrs (including Eleazar) are collectively called in Catholic tradition as “The Holy Maccabean Martyrs.”



## Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus

(1 Macc 2-4; 2 Macc 9-12)

In the days of Antiochus there also lived in Judea a priest named Mattathias. He and his five sons saw the evils done by the king to the people of Judah. He therefore cried out in the city with a loud voice, saying: “Let everyone that has zeal for the Law follow me.” He and his sons fled into the mountains, and many of the Jews followed them. Others, who also refused to obey the king’s command to abandon the Jewish religion, left the city and went into the desert. The king’s men prepared to make war against them, and to compel them to obey the king’s order. But Mattathias, his sons and their followers fought back. They attacked the king’s army, slew the sinners, and destroyed their idols and altars. (1 Macc 2:31-48)

When he was nearing death, the old Mattathias called his sons and exhorted them, saying: “My sons, take courage, and behave manfully in the law, for by it you shall be glorious.” After blessing them, he died. His sons buried him in the grave of his fathers, and all Israel mourned for him with great sorrow. (1 Macc 2:49-70)

His son, Judas Maccabeus, became the new leader of the Jews. All of Judas’ brothers helped him continue the rebellion that their father started against Syria. They faced the great armies of the king, trusting in God’s help alone. Judas said, “The success of war is not in the size of the army. Strength comes from Heaven... The Lord Himself will overthrow them before our face. As for you, fear them not.” (1 Macc 4:1-22)

Judas Maccabeus defeated the Syrian generals one after another. Finally, he and his army took Jerusalem. Seeing that the temple’s sanctuary was desolate and the altar profaned, they built a new altar, dedicated it and offered holocausts. Temple worship was restored. (1 Macc 4:36-59)



**Fig 3.6.3 Judas Maccabeus Enters Jerusalem and Cleanses the Temple**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Antiochus was embarrassed that his armies lost the war against the rebellious Jews, and that he also had lost control of Judea. He resolved to go back to Jerusalem with a big army, fully intent on turning Jerusalem into a graveyard for the Jews. In his pride he commanded his chariot to speed up to Jerusalem without stopping. But on the way he fell from his chariot and was stricken by an incurable plague of worms. He knew that this was a punishment from the Lord. Being grievously struck, he died a miserable death. (2 Macc 9:1-28)



Meanwhile, Lysias, the king's lieutenant and cousin, also gathered eighty thousand men, all the horsemen and eighty elephants, to reconquer Jerusalem. Judas Maccabeus and the Jews, seeing the sheer size of their enemy's army, begged God to send a good angel to save Israel. Then there appeared at Jerusalem a horseman<sup>258</sup> going before them in white clothing, with golden armor, carrying a spear. Together they all blessed the merciful Lord and took great courage, being ready to break through not only men, but also the fiercest beasts and walls of iron. Having a helper from heaven, they rushed violently upon the enemy like lions. They slew eleven thousand footmen and one thousand six hundred horsemen, and put all the rest to flight. Lysias, too, fled away shamefully. (2 Macc 11:1-12)

The Jews gained other victories that slowly freed their country from Syrian rule. But not without casualties. Many Jews also died during the wars against Syria. In one of these wars the men who came to bury the dead found idol offerings hidden under the coats of the soldiers who were slain. These offerings were stolen from the temples of pagan idols, and which the Jews were forbidden to touch. Now it became clear to all why these soldiers were slain. They all blessed the just judgment of the Lord who allowed these greedy soldiers to be punished. They turned to prayer, and begged the Lord that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. Judas Maccabeus exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, since they saw before their eyes what had happened on account of the sins of those who were slain. Then Judas sent two thousand drachmas<sup>259</sup> of silver to Jerusalem to be offered for the sins of the dead. The Bible concludes, *"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."* ( 2 Macc 12:39-46)

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<sup>258</sup> Actually, an angel in the form of a horseman. As in the days of King Hezekiah, who won the battle against Sennacherib through the help of an angel (2 Chr 32:21), an angel came to help the Jews win the war against Lysias' army.

<sup>259</sup> Two thousand drachmas of silver = 240 oz of silver, approx.





**Fig 3.6.4 Judas Maccabeus Prays for the Dead**

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

Judas Maccabeus died when Demetrius I was already the king of Syria. The king's new general, Bacchides, attacked him with an army of twenty thousand men and two thousand horsemen. At the time Judas was encamped in Elasa with only three thousand men with him. When his men saw how greatly they were outnumbered by their enemy's army, they were seized with fear. Many withdrew themselves out of the camp, leaving Judas with only eight hundred men. But Judas chose to fight rather than flee away, saying, "If our time be come, let us die manfully for our brothers, and let us not stain our glory." He and his men fought from morning till evening. Judas was slain and the rest fled away. His brothers buried him in the sepulcher of their fathers, and the people mourned for him many days. (1 Macc 9:1-22)

After the death of Judas Maccabeus, his brothers Jonathan and Simon became the leaders of the Jews.<sup>260</sup> The Maccabees steadfastly continued their rebellion against the Syrians until they freed Judah from Syrian rule, around 140 B.C. Simon, the last of the Maccabean brothers, died in 134 B.C., but the Jews continued their campaign to recover other parts of the former Kingdom of Israel.

But their victory was short-lived. In 67 B.C. two brothers struggled for control of the Kingdom of Judah – Hyrcanus II (the high-priest) and Aristobolus II (the head of the army). Overpowered by his brother, Hyrcanus sought the aid of the Arabs. The Romans noticed the situation and took the opportunity to bring Palestine under Roman control. They asked the Arabs to withdraw and, in 63 B.C. under the command of **Pompey the Great**, they invaded Palestine and annexed it to the Roman province of Syria. Thus, the Jews, who only recently freed themselves from Syrian domination, now became subject again to foreign rule – the Romans.

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<sup>260</sup> The leadership of Jonathan is described in 1 Macc 9:23-12:53. That of Simon is in 1 Macc 13:1-16:24. Other historical details not mentioned in Holy Scripture may be found in the works of the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus: "The Wars of the Jews" and the "Antiquities of the Jews."

## COMMENTARY

1. Judas was surnamed Maccabeus, from the Greek *Makkebet* which means “the hammer,” because by his courage he hammered the enemies of the Jews. The name “Maccabees,” a plural form of the name “Maccabeus,” is often applied to valiant personages who resisted King Antiochus. Thus, Judas’ other brothers have been traditionally called “the Maccabees.” Even the seven sons slain by Antiochus in the story, “The Martyrdom of a Woman and Her Seven Sons,” were sometimes referred to as “the seven Maccabees,” although technically the title “Maccabeus” (which means “hammer”) belonged only to Judas.
2. The rededication of the temple by the Maccabees in 165 B.C. is still being commemorated by the Jews today in a well-known feast, known as the **Hanukkah**. The festival lasts eight days and is marked by the kindling of eight lights.
3. The *First* and *Second Maccabees* are the last books of the Old Testament. There are actually two other books in the Maccabees series, called the *Third* and the *Fourth Maccabees*, but the Catholic Church considers only *1* and *2 Maccabees* as inspired, while it regards *3* and *4 Maccabees* as “apocryphal.” On the other hand, both the Jewish and Protestant Churches regard all the Maccabees series of books as apocryphal.
4. The book of *3 Maccabees* is not really about the revolt of the Maccabees, but about the persecution of the Jews under Ptolemy IV of Egypt. It was included in the Maccabees series only because it talks about a similar situation. *4 Maccabees* repeats the story of the martyrdom of the seven brothers and their mother.



## CHAPTER 7 THE JEWS UNDER ROMAN RULE<sup>261</sup>

(63 B.C. – 1 A.D.)

### Roman Rule

The Romans, now in control of Palestine, gave the Jews much latitude in the practice of their religion and the management of their internal affairs.



**Fig 3.6.5 Coin of Pompey the Great, ca 40 B.C.**  
Original Image by Carlomorino, License CC BY-SA 3.0

The **Sanhedrin**, or the Council, became the supreme religious and judicial court for the Jews. It was presided over by the high priest, and consisted mostly of the “ancients” and the “rabbis” (or lawyers). It had great authority that extended to all Jewish communities throughout the empire. It even had its own soldiers or police, but it could impose the death penalty only by consent of the Roman procurator.

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<sup>261</sup> This chapter is not contained in the Old Testament of the Bible, but is included here to give the reader an insight regarding the political and religious climate in Palestine in the years preceding the birth of Christ.

There were three religious groups that may be distinguished in the years just before the coming of Christ. These were:

1. The **Pharisees**, which were the conservatives who insisted on the faithful observance of the Mosaic Law, although they did not all come from the priestly class. Although they helped protect the true religion from pagan influences, they tended to be too ritualistic and legalistic. Two groups of Pharisees could be distinguished: the strict group, called the Shammaites, and the lenient group, called the Hillelites.
2. The **Sadducees**, which were more liberal in their conduct and in their views. They respected Moses and the Law, but they were more like the materialists, skeptics and rationalists of our own time, whose philosophical views shaped their beliefs to the point of heresy. For example, they denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body (Acts 23:8), the fact of God's providence, the existence of angels, demons and spirits, etc.
3. The **Essenes**, which was a monastic group that withdrew themselves from society, and were the ones who copied and kept the texts of Sacred Scripture now known as the "*dead sea scrolls*." Because of their secluded life, they did not have much influence in the life of the ordinary Jew before and during the time of Christ. However, their valuable work, accidentally discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves near Qumran (on the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea), contained fragments and copies of some of the disputed deuterocanonical books *in their original Hebrew and Aramaic languages*, particularly Tobit, Sirach, and Baruch, including Chapter 6 of Baruch (also known as the Letter of Jeremiah).

## Herod the Great

The Jews did not like paying taxes to a foreign power and being subjected to foreign rule. So, riots and rebellion often broke out in Palestine, which were ably suppressed by the powerful Roman army. In a strategic move to control Palestine more effectively, the Roman Senate in 37 B.C. appointed a clever but cruel man, Herod, to serve as king of Palestine.<sup>262</sup> This was Herod the Great, the same king who is infamously remembered in history for slaughtering the Holy Innocents during the infancy of Christ. He bribed the Romans to make himself king of Palestine.

King Herod the Great must be distinguished from his three sons, who also carry the name “Herod.” Five years before his death Herod the Great divided his kingdom among his three sons: Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Herod Philip, but he also gave a part of the territory to his granddaughter, Salome (See Map).<sup>263</sup>

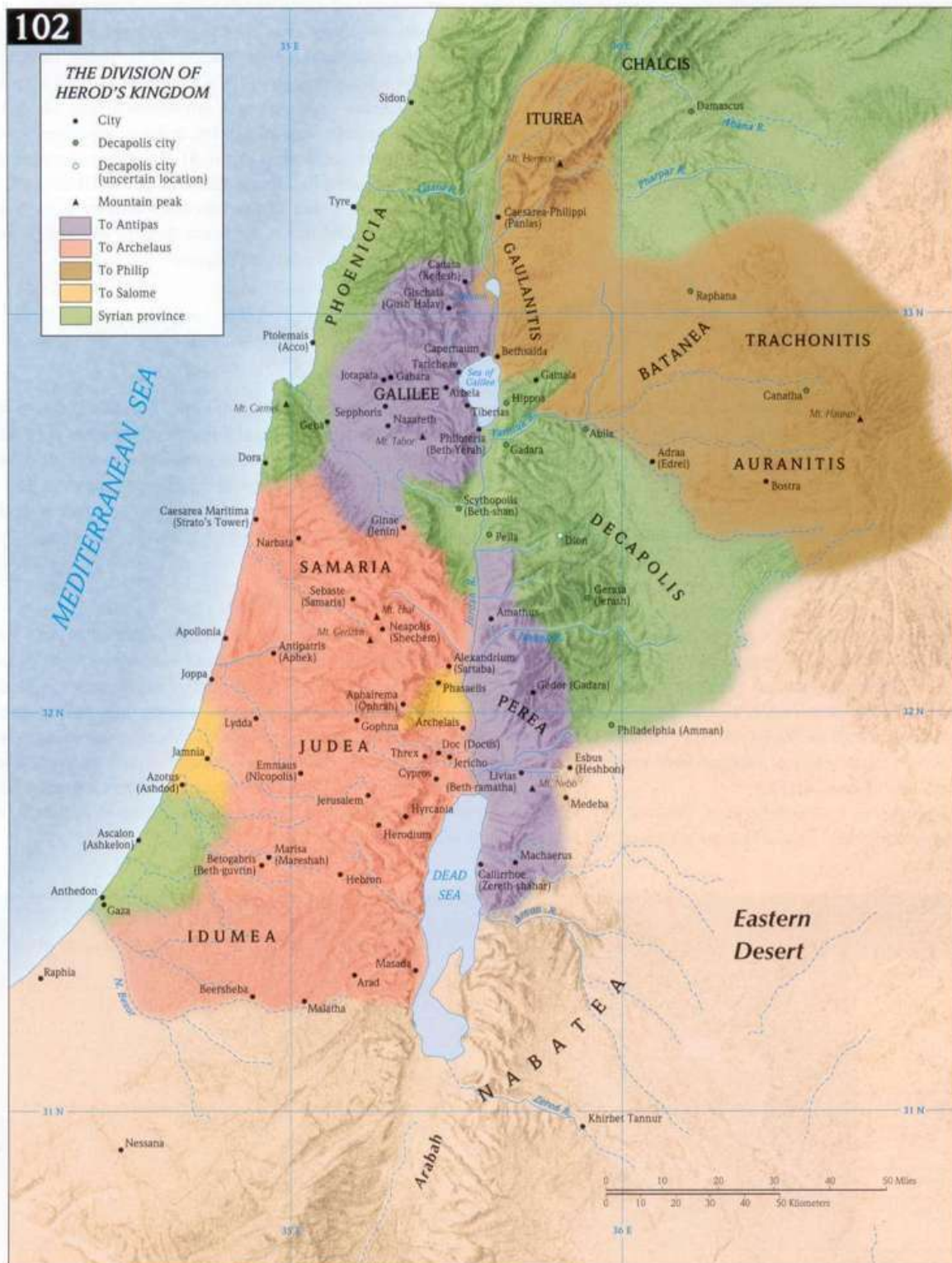
1. **Herod Archelaus** governed Judea, Samaria and Idumea.
2. **Herod Antipas** took over the government of Galilee and Perea. He was the Herod who ordered the beheading of St. John the Baptist, and who tried Christ during His Passion.
3. **Herod Philip** took over the territory of Iturea and Trachonitis east of the river Jordan, but he was not featured in any of the gospel narratives.

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<sup>262</sup> Although he was a Jew by religion, he was actually not a Hebrew but an Idumaeon (a Roman term for an Edomite). Thus, the “scepter” of Judea was no longer in the hands of the tribe of Judah when Christ came, fulfilling a prophecy made by Jacob before his death: “The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of nations” (Gen 9:10).

<sup>263</sup> Salome received Jarnia, Ashdod and Phasaelis. See Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Ch.8, #1.





**Fig 3.6.6 Division of Herod the Great's Kingdom**  
Map 102 from the *Bible Atlas*, by Access Foundation

## The World before Christ

Actually, King Herod was only a “puppet,” because the supreme political power still remained with the Roman governor. But, to empower himself more fully, Herod removed all executive authority from the Sanhedrin and transferred them to himself, thus reducing the Sanhedrin into a purely religious body. Although he was not a Hebrew, he was Jewish by religion and was responsible for repairing and expanding the temple of Jerusalem in 20 B.C. The temple in which Christ preached, and which He visited during His childhood, was the temple rebuilt and expanded by Herod the Great.

This was the political and religious climate of Israel when Christ was born, which was around 1 B.C.<sup>264</sup> Although the Jews had returned to the true religion, moral corruption, greed and political ambition continued to plague them as they did most of humanity. The Jews had long waited for the Messiah, but due to their long history of being continually subject to foreign rule, many of them thought of the Messiah as someone who would liberate them from foreign domination, rather than someone who would redeem them from sin.

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<sup>264</sup> Recent research shows that Christ was born on April 6, 1 B.C. The estimate is based on the year of Herod's death, which in turn is estimated based on a lunar eclipse supposedly occurring shortly before his death. NASA calculations show that there was indeed a lunar eclipse on Dec. 29, 1 B.C. See <http://www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/herod/herod.html#3.1> Many scholars previously believed that the monk, Dionysius the Little, who had set the beginning of the Christian era at A.D. 1, miscalculated the birth of Christ, which they thought happened at 4 B.C. Now, it appears that the monk was not wrong after all.

## COMMENTARY

1. Although *1* and *2 Maccabees* are the last books of the Old Testament, there are other books in the Old Testament that have not been discussed in this history. These are the *doctrinal* books. However, two of the doctrinal books have been discussed; namely, the *Book of Job* (discussed in Part One, Chapter 8) and the *Book of Psalms* (discussed in Part Two, Chapter 7, in connection with its author, King David). However, there are five other doctrinal books that belong to the Old Testament which need to be mentioned:
  - a. The *Book of Proverbs*, attributed to King Solomon, is a collection of sayings which teach us how to act and live wisely and uprightly before God.
  - b. *Qoheleth*, which is also known as *Ecclesiastes*, is a meditation on the futility or pointlessness of worldly pursuits. Nothing is ultimately worthwhile doing except serving God and keeping His commandments.
  - c. The *Song of Songs* is a love poem in which the bride (a poor shepherd girl) and the groom (a king) alternately speak of their love for one another. The King stands as a symbol for the Lord, and the shepherd girl represents Israel or the Church. The Song of Songs is traditionally viewed as an allegory of Christ's love for His Church.
  - d. *Sirach*, also known as *Ecclesiasticus*, is similar to the Book of Proverbs in that it teaches us how to live a good and moral life. The author – Jesus, son of Sirach, – shows us, by beautiful and powerful verses, how to live in the world without compromising our relationship with God.
  - e. The *Book of Wisdom*, also called the *Wisdom of Solomon*, was not really written by King Solomon, but by a Greek-speaking Jew in Alexandria, Egypt. The book is a poem in praise of Wisdom and, in a way, it offers a solution to the problem discussed in the Book of Job. The book shows how in the next life God punishes evil and rewards the good.



## Picture Credits / Sources

### **Cover Page: Egyptian Maid Shows Baby Moses to Pharaoh's Daughter**

Cropped from an advertisement for patent tonic sold by Dr. D. Jayne, 1889.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dr\\_D\\_Jayne%27s\\_Tonic\\_Vermifuge\\_advertisement.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dr_D_Jayne%27s_Tonic_Vermifuge_advertisement.jpg)

### **Fig 1 Jacob's Dream**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolome-Esteban-Murillo-Jacob-s-Dream.jpg>

### **Fig 1.1.1 God the Father, Creator of the World**

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<https://www.maxpixel.net/The-Creation-Of-The-Earth-All-Globe-Universe-3420058>

### **Fig 1.1.2 Paradise – God's Creation on Earth**

Artist: Jan Brueghel the Younger (1601-1678)

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### **Fig 1.1.3 A Big Battle in Heaven**

Picture #61 from an old Portuguese catechism, *Catecismo Ilustrado de Pio X*, 1910

<http://www.sendarium.com/p/catecismo-ilustrado-de-1910.html>

### **Fig 1.1.4 St. Michael the Archangel**

Artist: Raphael, or Raffaello Sanzio (1483-1520)

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### **Fig 1.1.5 The Bliss of Paradise**

Artist: Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov (1848-1926)

Cathedral of St. Vladimir, Kiev, Ukraine

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/viktor-vasnetsov/bliss-of-paradise-1896>

### **Fig 1.1.6 The Temptation**

Artist: Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov (1848-1926)

Cathedral of St. Vladimir, Kiev, Ukraine

Source link: [https://commonGod.s.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vasnetsov\\_Temptation.jpg](https://commonGod.s.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vasnetsov_Temptation.jpg)

### **Fig 1.1.7 Adam and Eve Driven from Paradise**

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

<http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Adam-and-Eve-Driven-from-Paradise-001.jpg>

**Fig 1.2.1 The Offerings of Cain and Abel**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872); originally in black and white, colored later.  
Source: *Old Testament Stories from the Pentateuch*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, ca. 1890

**Fig 1.2.2 The Murder of Abel**

Artist: Palma il Giovane (1550-1628)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palma\\_il\\_Giovane\\_-\\_Cain\\_and\\_Abel\\_GG\\_1576.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palma_il_Giovane_-_Cain_and_Abel_GG_1576.jpg)

**Fig 1.3.1 Noah and His Sons Build the Ark**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in *Bible Primer – Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 14.  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/page2>

**Fig 1.3.2 The Animals Going into the ark**

A painting by Edward Hicks (1780-1849)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward\\_Hicks,\\_American\\_-\\_Noah%27s\\_Ark\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Hicks,_American_-_Noah%27s_Ark_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

**Fig 1.3.3 The Great Flood**

Artist unknown; Italian School, 1600-1700

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/italian-school-17th-century-the-great-flood>

**Fig 1.3.4 The Return of the Dove to the Ark**

Artist: John Everett Millais (1829-1896)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Millais\\_-\\_Die\\_Rückkehr\\_der\\_Taube\\_zur\\_Arche\\_Noah.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Millais_-_Die_Rückkehr_der_Taube_zur_Arche_Noah.jpg)

**Fig 1.3.5 Noah Makes an Offering; God Makes a Promise**

Artist: Daniel Maclise (1806-1870)

Leeds Museums and Galleries; photo by Bridgeman Images

<https://www.artuk.org/discover/artists/macclise-daniel-18061870#>

**Fig 1.3.6 The Sons of Noah**

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tissot\\_Shem,\\_Ham\\_and\\_Japheth.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tissot_Shem,_Ham_and_Japheth.jpg)

**Fig 1.4.1 The Tower of Babel**

By an anonymous Dutch Artist

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**Fig 1.4.2 Ziggurat of Ur (Iraq)**

Photo by Kaufingdude, CC BY-SA 3.0

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**Fig 1.5.1 Map of Mesopotamia, the Homeland of Abraham**

Map #003 from *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

<http://gregoryblvdcoc.org/Bible%20Maps/Bible%20Atlas%20Online%20by%20Access%20Foundation.htm>

**Fig 1.5.2 Abram Travels to Canaan with His Family**

Artist: József Molnár (1821-1899)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Molnár\\_Ábrahám\\_kiköltözése\\_1850.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Molnár_Ábrahám_kiköltözése_1850.jpg)

**Fig 1.5.3 Abram Builds an Altar**

Artwork is signed, but the signature is undecipherable (See flickr photo)

The illustration was used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Four, 1927, p. 9.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/10807421096/in/album-72157637568800625/>

**Fig 1.5.4 Abraham Receives Bread and Wine from King Melchizedek**

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

<https://www.artbible.info/art/large/186.html>

**Fig. 1.5.5 Abram Looks Outside to See the Stars**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953), after Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Illustration used in *Bible Primer, Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 18.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/page1>

**Fig 1.5.6 Abram Greets His Visitors**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Murillo\\_Abraham.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Murillo_Abraham.jpg)

**Fig 1.5.7 Lot and His Daughters Flee from Sodom**

Artist: Benjamin West (1738-1820)

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**Fig 1.5.8 Lot and His Daughters**

Artist: Marcantonio Franceschini (1648-1729)

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**Fig 1.5.9 Abraham and Isaac Go to Offer a Holocaust**

Artist: Pedro Orrente (1580-1645)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abraham\\_e\\_Isaac\\_camino\\_del\\_sacrificio,\\_de\\_Pedro\\_de\\_Orrrente\\_\(Museo\\_del\\_Prado\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abraham_e_Isaac_camino_del_sacrificio,_de_Pedro_de_Orrrente_(Museo_del_Prado).jpg)



**Fig 1.5.10 The “Angel of the Lord” Stops Abraham from Killing Isaac**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1639-1709)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abraham%27s\\_Sacrifice\\_of\\_Isaac\\_by\\_Il\\_Baciccio,\\_c.\\_1700,\\_High\\_Museum\\_of\\_Art.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abraham%27s_Sacrifice_of_Isaac_by_Il_Baciccio,_c._1700,_High_Museum_of_Art.jpg)

**Fig 1.5.11 Rebekah Gives Drink to Abraham’s Servant**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

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**Fig 1.6.1 Esau Sells His Birthright**

Artist: Matthias Stom (1615-1649)

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**Fig 1.6.2 Isaac Blesses Jacob**

Artist: Nicolas-Guy Brenet (1728-1792)

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**Fig 1.6.3 Jacob’s Dream**

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

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**Fig 1.6.4 Jacob Meets Rachel**

Artist: Joseph von Führich (1800-1876)

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**Fig 1.6.5 Jacob with Laban’s Flock**

Artist: Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jusepe\\_de\\_Ribera\\_\(1591-1652\)\\_-\\_Jacob\\_with\\_the\\_Flock\\_of\\_Laban\\_-\\_NG244\\_-\\_National\\_Gallery.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jusepe_de_Ribera_(1591-1652)_-_Jacob_with_the_Flock_of_Laban_-_NG244_-_National_Gallery.jpg)

**Fig 1.6.6 Family Tree**

The family tree from Wikipedia is under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike license.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rachel>

**Fig 1.6.7 Jacob and His Family Leave for Canaan**

Artist: Filippo Lauri (1623-1694)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Filippo\\_Lauri\\_\(Rome\\_1623-Rome\\_1694\)\\_-\\_Jacob\\_Fleeing\\_from\\_Laban\\_-\\_RCIN\\_406356\\_-\\_Royal\\_Collection.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Filippo_Lauri_(Rome_1623-Rome_1694)_-_Jacob_Fleeing_from_Laban_-_RCIN_406356_-_Royal_Collection.jpg)

**Fig 1.6.8 Rachel Sits on and Hides Laban’s Idols**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni\\_Battista\\_Tiepolo\\_-\\_Rachel\\_Hiding\\_the\\_Idols\\_from\\_her\\_Father\\_Laban\\_-\\_WGA22245.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni_Battista_Tiepolo_-_Rachel_Hiding_the_Idols_from_her_Father_Laban_-_WGA22245.jpg)

**Fig 1.6.9 Jacob Wrestles with an Angel**

Artist: Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacob\\_Wrestling\\_with\\_the\\_Angel.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacob_Wrestling_with_the_Angel.jpg)

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**Fig 1.6.10 Jacob and Esau Reconcile**

Artist: Francesco Hayez (1791-1882)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco\\_Hayez\\_061.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francesco_Hayez_061.jpg)

**Fig 1.6.11 The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel**

Artist: Gustav Ferdinand Metz (1817-1853)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metz\\_Der\\_Tod\\_Rahels.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metz_Der_Tod_Rahels.jpg)

**Fig 1.7.1 Joseph's Dreams**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953).

Illustration used in *Bible Primer, Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 34.

**Fig 1.7.2 Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers**

Artist unknown.

Illustration used in Isabella M. Aldon, *Bible Pictures and Stories in Large Print*, 1898, frontispiece

**Fig 1.7.3 Joseph and Potiphar's Wife**

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido\\_Reni\\_\(Italian\\_-\\_Joseph\\_and\\_Potiphar%27s\\_Wife\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido_Reni_(Italian_-_Joseph_and_Potiphar%27s_Wife_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

**Fig 1.7.4 Joseph Interprets the Butler's and the Baker's Dreams**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 1.7.5 Joseph Interprets the Pharaoh's Dreams**

Artist: Reginald Arthur (1862-1930)

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/joseph-interpreting-pharaohs-dream-1894-reginald-arthur.html>

**Fig 1.7.6 Joseph, Governor of Egypt**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953), after Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's original drawing.

Illustration used in *Bible Primer, Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 38, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Two, 1925, p. 118.

<http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/Pictures/Standard%20Bible%20Story%20Readers,%20Book%20Two/target61.html>

**Fig 1.7.7 Joseph's Brothers Bow to Joseph and Do Not Recognize Him**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

<https://medium.com/@sidramahmood/qalam-gems-embodiment-excellence-through-the-story-of-joseph-18e675e7ff2f>

**Fig 1.7.8 The Steward Finds the Silver Cup in Benjamin's Sack**

Artist: Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov (1806-1858)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexandr\\_Ivanov\\_050.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexandr_Ivanov_050.JPG)

**Fig 1.7.9 Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers**

Artist: François Gérard (1770-1837)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gérard\\_Joseph\\_reconnu\\_par\\_ses\\_frères.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gérard_Joseph_reconnu_par_ses_frères.jpg)

**Fig 1.7.10 Joseph Presents His Father to Pharaoh**

Illustrators: O.A. Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Three, 1926, p. 63

**Fig 1.7.11 Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons**

Artist: Benjamin West (1738-1820)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacob\\_Blessing\\_Ephraim\\_and\\_Manasseh,\\_by\\_Benjamin\\_West\\_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacob_Blessing_Ephraim_and_Manasseh,_by_Benjamin_West_(cropped).jpg)

**Fig 1.8.1 Job and His Friends**

Artist: Ilya Repin (1844-1930)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Job\\_and\\_his\\_friends.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Job_and_his_friends.jpg)

**Fig 1.8.2 The Patient Job Makes a Prophecy**

Artist: Gerard Seghers (1591-1651)

<https://www.artbible.info/art/large/825.html>

**Fig 1.8.3 Job Is Restored to Prosperity**

Artist: Laurent de La Hyre (1606-1656)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Job-restored-to-prosperity.jpg>

**Fig 2.1.1 Egyptian Taskmasters Oppress the Israelites with Hard Labor**

A painting by Edward Poynter (1836-1919)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1867\\_Edward\\_Poynter\\_-\\_Israel\\_in\\_Egypt.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1867_Edward_Poynter_-_Israel_in_Egypt.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.2 Miriam Watches Baby Moses Drift among the Reeds**

Source: *Bible Pictures and Stories in Large Print*, published by Lothrop Publishing Co., Boston, 1898

**Fig 2.1.3 Egyptian Maid Shows Basket with Baby Moses to Pharaoh's Daughter**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Originally in black and white. Colored version by Fritz Kredel.

Source: *The Big Golden Book of Bible Stories*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1958, p.19.

**Fig 2.1.4 The Call of Moses from the Burning Bush**

Illustration from *Bible Primer, Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 43.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bible\\_primer,\\_Old\\_Testament,\\_for\\_use\\_in\\_the\\_primary\\_department\\_of\\_Sunday\\_schools\\_\(1919\)\\_14781723742.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bible_primer,_Old_Testament,_for_use_in_the_primary_department_of_Sunday_schools_(1919)_14781723742.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.5 Moses and Aaron before the Pharaoh**

Illustration from *Bible Primer, Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 46.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/page1>

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**Fig 2.1.6 The Plague of Flies**

Artist: James Joseph Jacques Tissot (1836-1902)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tissot\\_The\\_Plague\\_of\\_Flies.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tissot_The_Plague_of_Flies.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.7 Death of the Pharaoh's Firstborn**

Artist: Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Death\\_of\\_the\\_Firstborn\\_Alma\\_Tadema.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Death_of_the_Firstborn_Alma_Tadema.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.8 The Pillar of Cloud Shows the Israelites the Way**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 2.1.9 The Crossing of the Red Sea**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 2.1.10 The Drowning of Pharaoh's Army**

Artist: Henri-Frédéric Schopin (1804-1880)

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-children-of-israel-crossing-the-red-sea-189060>

**Fig 2.1.11 The Israelites Gather Manna**

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 2.1.12 Moses Strikes the Rock at Mount Horeb**

Artist: Valerio Castello (1624-2659)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valerio\\_Castello\\_-\\_Moses\\_Striking\\_the\\_Rock\\_-\\_WGA04539.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valerio_Castello_-_Moses_Striking_the_Rock_-_WGA04539.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.13 Victory over Amalek**

Artist: Joseph von Führich (1800-1876)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_von\\_Führich\\_-\\_Der\\_betende\\_Moses\\_mit\\_Aaron\\_und\\_Hur\\_auf\\_dem\\_Berge\\_Horeb\\_-\\_906\\_-\\_Österreichische\\_Galerie\\_Belvedere.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_von_Führich_-_Der_betende_Moses_mit_Aaron_und_Hur_auf_dem_Berge_Horeb_-_906_-_Österreichische_Galerie_Belvedere.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.14 Moses Receives the Ten Commandments**

Original Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

See Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *Bibel in Bildern*, Leipzig, Georg Wigand's Verlag, p.161

The colored version is found in the Internet without provenance.

<https://media.elitsy.ru/otvety/zachem-sobljudat-zapovedi/>

**Fig 2.1.15 Adoration of the Golden Calf**

Artist: Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolas\\_Poussin\\_-\\_The\\_Adoration\\_of\\_the\\_Golden\\_Calf\\_-\\_WGA18293.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicolas_Poussin_-_The_Adoration_of_the_Golden_Calf_-_WGA18293.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.16 Moses Breaks the Stone Tables of the Covenant (the Ten Commandments)**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Originally in black and white. Colored version by Fritz Kredel.

From *The Big Golden Book of Bible Stories*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1958, p.22.

**Fig 2.1.17 God Writes the Ten Commandments Again**

Artist: Joseph Ritter von Führich (Austrian, 1800-1876)

<https://artvee.com/dl/god-writes-the-ten-commandments-on-two-stone-tablets-to-moses-on-mount-sinai>

**Fig 2.1.18 Model of the Tabernacle in Timna Valley Park, Israel**

Photo by Ruk7, License CC BY-SA 3.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stiftshuette\\_Modell\\_Timnapark.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stiftshuette_Modell_Timnapark.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.19 Layout of the Tabernacle and Courtyard**

<https://wisdomdownunder.com/spirituality/restoring-the-priesthood-of-all-believers/restoring-the-priesthood-of-all-believers-through-gods-pattern-in-the-tabernacle-of-meeting-part-1>

**Fig 2.1.20 The Ark of the Covenant**

Replica of the Ark of the Covenant in the Royal Arch Room of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, CC BY-SA 2.5

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Royal\\_Arch\\_Room\\_Ark\\_replica\\_2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Arch_Room_Ark_replica_2.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.21 The Tabernacle at Night**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration from Bible Primer, Old Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 56.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/page1>

**Fig 2.1.22 High Priest Inside the Tabernacle Celebrates the Feast of the Atonement**

Illustration from the *The Holy Bible*, by Dr. William Smith, et al., 1881, p. 8a

**Fig 2.1.23 Return of the Scouts**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: *Old Testament Stories – Joshua, Ruth, David, Daniel*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, ca. 1890

**Fig 2.1.24 The Brazen Serpent**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: *Old Testament Stories – From the Pentateuch*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, ca. 1890, p.13.

**Fig 2.1.25 Balaam and His Ass**

Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:P1150002\\_Cognacq-Jay\\_Rembrandt\\_anesse\\_de\\_Balaam\\_rwk.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:P1150002_Cognacq-Jay_Rembrandt_anesse_de_Balaam_rwk.jpg)

**Fig 2.1.26 Moses Views the Promised Land from Mount Nebo**

From *Cottage Pictures from the Old Testament*, 1857, published by TimeLife

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/old-testament/QQFPQBTtLydb4A?hl=en>

**Fig 2.2.1 Joshua**

From Marysrosaries.com

[http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Joshua\\_001.jpg](http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Joshua_001.jpg)

**Fig 2.2.2 Rahab on the Roof Hides the Spies (Jos 2:6)**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Five, 1928, p. 16.

**Fig 2.2.3 The Fall of Jericho**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Five, 1928, p. 21.

**Fig 2.2.4 Joshua Orders the Sun to Stop Moving**

Artist: Carlo Maratta (1625-1713)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Collection\\_Motais\\_de\\_Narbonne\\_-\\_Josué\\_arrête\\_la\\_course\\_du\\_soleil\\_-\\_Carlo\\_Maratta.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Collection_Motais_de_Narbonne_-_Josué_arrête_la_course_du_soleil_-_Carlo_Maratta.jpg)

**Fig 2.2.5 The Tribal Allotments of Israel**

Map #39 from *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

<http://gregoryblvdcoc.org/Bible%20Maps/039.jpg>

**Fig 2.3.1 Gideon Thanks God for the Miracle of the Dew**

Artist: Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maarten\\_van\\_Heemskerck\\_024.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maarten_van_Heemskerck_024.jpg)

**Fig 2.3.2 Gideon and His Three Hundred Men**

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration from Bible Primer, Old Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 66.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/page1>

**Fig 2.3.3 Samson Kills a Lion with His Bare Hands**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: Mrs. C. D. Francis, *The Children's Book of Old Testament Story*, 1913, p.114



**Fig 2.3.4 Delilah Calls the Barber**

Artist: Jose Salome Pina (1830-1909)

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/samson-and-delilah-jose-salome-pina.html>

**Fig 2.3.5 Blind Samson in Prison**

Artist: Carl Bloch (1834-1890)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl\\_Bloch\\_-\\_Samson\\_and\\_the\\_Philistines\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl_Bloch_-_Samson_and_the_Philistines_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

**Fig 2.3.6 Samson Destroys the Temple of Dagon**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Originally in black and white; colored by Fritz Kredel.

From *The Big Golden Book of Bible Stories*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1958, p.27.

**Fig 2.3.7 Dagon**

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dagon1.jpg>

**Fig 2.4.1 Ruth Beggings Naomi that She Might Stay with Her**

Artist: Philip Hermogenes Calderon (1833-1898)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philip\\_Hermogenes\\_Calderon\\_-\\_Ruth\\_and\\_Naomi.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philip_Hermogenes_Calderon_-_Ruth_and_Naomi.jpg)

**Fig 2.4.2 Ruth in the Field of Boaz**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: Mrs. C. D. Francis, *The Children's Book of Old Testament Story*, 1913, p.118.

**Fig 2.4.3 Genealogy Showing the Descent of David from Ruth**

From the Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Ruth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Ruth)

**Fig 2.5.1 Hannah Presents the Young Samuel to Eli**

Artist: Frank William Warwick Topham (1838-1924)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel\\_dedicated\\_by\\_Hannah.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel_dedicated_by_Hannah.jpg)

**Fig 2.5.2 Samuel Reports to Eli what God Revealed to Him.**

Artist: John Singleton Copley (1738-1815)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eli\\_and\\_Samuel.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eli_and_Samuel.jpg)

**Fig 2.5.3 “Speak, Lord, for Your Servant Listens” (1 Sam 3:10)**

Artist: Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:InfantSamuel.jpg>

**Fig 2.6.1 Samuel Anoints Saul King of Israel**

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration from Bible Primer, Old Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 72.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/page1>

**Fig 2.6.2 Samuel Anoints the Young David as Successor to King Saul**

Artist: Felix-Joseph Barrias (1822-1907)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Felix-Joseph\\_Barrias\\_-\\_Anointing\\_of\\_David\\_by\\_Saul.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Felix-Joseph_Barrias_-_Anointing_of_David_by_Saul.jpg)

**Fig 2.6.3 David Plays the Harp for Saul**

Artist: Julius Kronberg (1850-1921)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David\\_and\\_Saul\\_\(Julius\\_Kronberg\)\\_-\\_Nationalmuseum\\_-\\_18384.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David_and_Saul_(Julius_Kronberg)_-_Nationalmuseum_-_18384.tif)

**Fig 2.6.4 David Kills Goliath**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: *Old Testament Stories – Joshua, Ruth, David, Daniel*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, ca. 1890, p. 8

**Fig 2.6.5 Saul Throws His Spear at David**

Artist: Constantin Hansen (1804-1880)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantin\\_Hansen\\_001.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantin_Hansen_001.jpg)

**Fig 2.6.6 David Spares King Saul's Life**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Originally in black and white; colored by Fritz Kredel.

From *The Big Golden Book of Bible Stories*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1958, p.32.

**Fig 2.6.7 Suicidal Death of King Saul**

Image found in many places in the Internet without provenance.

<https://www.pinterest.com/craftyabe/king-saul/>

**Fig 2.7.1 Statue of King David**

A statue in the Borghese Chapel of the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Italy.

Sculptor: Nicolas Cordier (1567-1612)

Photo by Jastrow, released into the public domain worldwide.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David\\_SM\\_Maggiore.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David_SM_Maggiore.jpg)

**Fig 2.7.2 Uzzah Touches the Ark**

From a Bible card published by Providence Lithograph Co., 1896

**Fig 2.7.3 Nathan Prophesies to David**

Artist unknown, 1800's – early 1900's.

Image found in many places in the Internet without provenance.

**Fig 2.7.4 David Shows Mercy to Meribbaal**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Three, 1926, p. 127.

**Fig 2.7.5 David, “the Excellent Psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam 23:1)**

Artist: Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard\\_van\\_Honthorst\\_-\\_King\\_David\\_Playing\\_the\\_Harp\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard_van_Honthorst_-_King_David_Playing_the_Harp_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

**Fig 2.7.6 Bathsheba in King David’s Palace**

Artist: Frank Bernard Dicksee (1853-1928)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dicksee-Passion-1892.jpg>

**Fig 2.7.7 Nathan Rebukes David: “You Are the Man” (2 Sam 12:7)**

Artist: Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807)

<http://www.intofineart.com/htmlimg/image-45169.html>

**Fig 2.7.8 The Death of Absalom**

Tapestry entitled Death of Absalom.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muerte\\_de\\_absalon\\_en\\_el\\_CESEDEN.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muerte_de_absalon_en_el_CESEDEN.jpg)

**Fig 2.7.9 Bathsheba Reminds David of His Promise to Make Solomon the Next King**

Artist: Frederick Goodall (1822-1904)

<http://19thcenturybritpaint.blogspot.com/2013/12/frederick-goodall.html>

**Fig 2.7.10 Tel Dan Stele at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem**

Photographed at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem by Yoav Dothan.

GNU Free Documentation License:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel\\_and\\_Saidye\\_Bronfman\\_Archaeology\\_WingDSCN5105.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel_and_Saidye_Bronfman_Archaeology_WingDSCN5105.JPG)

**Fig 2.8.1 The Judgment of King Solomon**

Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

<https://www.mcba.ch/en/collection/le-jugement-de-salomon-the-judgement-of-solomon/>

**Fig 2.8.2 The Temple of Solomon**

A digital rendition by Johnreve, Jan. 2, 2010, released to the public domain.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem\\_temple3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem_temple3.jpg)

**Fig 2.8.3 Floor Plan of the Temple**

Pink = Holy of Holies (contains the Ark); Blue = Sanctuary; White = Porch

Green = Table of Shewbread; Pale Orange = Storage/Administrative areas

Source: The Encyclopedia Biblica, 1903

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C%2BB-Temple-Fig1-GroundPlan.PNG>

**Fig 2.8.4 Solomon Dedicates the Temple**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Six, 1929, p. 99.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625/with/10807496266/>



**Fig 2.8.5 Visit of the Queen of Sheba**

Artist: Giovanni Demin (1789-1859)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sheba\\_demin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sheba_demin.jpg)

**Fig 2.8.6 King Solomon Worships an Idol**

Artist: Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salomone\\_adora\\_l%27idolo\\_-\\_Berrettini.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salomone_adora_l%27idolo_-_Berrettini.png)

**Fig 2.8.7 The Divided Kingdom**

Map No. 57 from *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

<http://gregoryblvdcoc.org/Bible%20Maps/057.jpg>

**Fig 3.1.1 Jeroboam's Idolatry**

Artist: Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jeroboam.jpg>

**Fig 3.1.2 The Ravens Feed Elijah**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in *Bible Primer – Old Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1919, p. 90.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.1.3 Elijah by His Prayer Revives the Widow's Son**

Artist: Louis Hersent (1777-1860)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ElijahByLouisHersent.JPG>

**Fig 3.1.4 God Answers Elijah's Prayer with Fire**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.1.5 An Angel Wakes up Elijah**

Artist: Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680)

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/ferdinand-bol/bijbelse-voorstelling-1669>

**Fig 3.1.6 The Death of Jezebel**

Artist: William Brassey Hole (1846-1917)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_death\\_of\\_Jezebel\\_-\\_William\\_Brassey\\_Hole.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_death_of_Jezebel_-_William_Brassey_Hole.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.7 Map for the Story of Elijah and Elisha**

Map No. 62 from *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

[http://gregoryblvdcoc.org/Bible Maps/062.jpg](http://gregoryblvdcoc.org/Bible%20Maps/062.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.8 Elijah Taken up by a Whirlwind into Heaven in a Chariot of Fire**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953), based on an engraving by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.1.9 Elisha Restores the Shunammite Woman's Son**

Artist: Benjamin West (1738-1820)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elisha\\_raises\\_son\\_BenjaminWest.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elisha_raises_son_BenjaminWest.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.10 The Great Fish Vomits Jonah out on Dry Land**

Artist: Pieter Lastman (1583-1633)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter\\_Lastman\\_-\\_Jonah\\_and\\_the\\_Whale\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Lastman_-_Jonah_and_the_Whale_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.11 Jonah Preaches in Nineveh**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.1.12 The Prophet Amos**

[http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Prophet\\_Amos\\_002.jpg](http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Prophet_Amos_002.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.13 The Prophet Hosea**

[http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Prophet\\_Hosea\\_001.jpg](http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Prophet_Hosea_001.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.14 Tobit and Anna with a Baby Goat**

Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn (1606-1669)

<https://www.artbible.info/art/large/99.html>

**Fig 3.1.15 Tobias and the Angel**

By an unknown 18<sup>th</sup> century artist

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael\\_und\\_Tobias\\_französisch\\_18\\_Jh.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael_und_Tobias_französisch_18_Jh.jpg)

**Fig 3.1.16 The Healing of Tobit**

Artist: Bernardo Strozzi (1581-1644)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strozzi,\\_Bernardo\\_-\\_The\\_Healing\\_of\\_Tobit\\_-\\_c.\\_1635.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strozzi,_Bernardo_-_The_Healing_of_Tobit_-_c._1635.jpg)

**Fig 3.2.1 Rehoboam and His Son Abijam**

A fresco at the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rehoboam\\_-\\_Abijah.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rehoboam_-_Abijah.jpg)

**Fig 3.2.2 The Defeat of Sennacherib**

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter\\_Paul\\_Rubens\\_082.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens_082.jpg)

**Fig 3.2.3 General Holofernes of Assyria**

Published by Guillaume Rouille (1518-1589)

Source: “*Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum*”

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holofernes.jpg>

**Fig 3.2.4 Judith with the Head of Holofernes**

Artist: Heinrich Schwemminger (1803-1884)

From Art UK, Government Art Collection

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/judith-with-the-head-of-holofernes-29444>

**Fig 3.2.5 The Prophet Isaiah**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jesaja\\_\(Michelangelo\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jesaja_(Michelangelo).jpg)

**Fig 3.2.6 The Cleansing of Isaiah's Lips**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770)

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/evidence-for-historical-isaiah-announced-by-archaeologists>

**Fig 3.2.7 The Prophet Jeremiah**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo\\_Buonarroti\\_027.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo_Buonarroti_027.jpg)

**Fig 3.2.8 Baruch Writes Jeremiah's Prophecies**

Artist: Paul-Gustave Louis Christophe Doré (1832-1883)

Original engraving is in black and white.

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/gustave-dore/baruch-writes-jeremiah-s-prophecies>

Colorized version is from Granger Academic:

<https://www.grangeracademic.com/results.asp?image=0029365&itemw=4&itemf=0002&itemstep=1&itemx=16>

**Fig 3.2.9 Jeremiah Laments the Destruction of Jerusalem**

Artist: Eduard Julius Friedrich Bendemann (1811-1889)

[https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Eduard\\_Bendemann\\_-\\_Jeremia\\_seated\\_in\\_the\\_ruins\\_of\\_Jerusalem.jpg](https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Eduard_Bendemann_-_Jeremia_seated_in_the_ruins_of_Jerusalem.jpg)

**Fig 3.2.10 The Prophet Micah**

[http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Prophet\\_Micah\\_001.jpg](http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Prophet_Micah_001.jpg)

**Fig 3.3.1 Jews Exiled to Babylon**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.3.2 Jews Mourn their Exile in Babylon**

Artist: Eduard Bendemann (1811-1889)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eduard\\_Bendemann-Die\\_trauernden\\_Juden\\_im\\_Exil\\_um\\_1832.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eduard_Bendemann-Die_trauernden_Juden_im_Exil_um_1832.jpg)



**Fig 3.3.3 The Prophet Baruch**

Statue in the Servite church in Vienna

Photo by Herzi Pinki, License CC BY-SA 3.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baruch,\\_Servite\\_church,\\_Vienna.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baruch,_Servite_church,_Vienna.jpg)

**Fig 3.3.4 The Prophet Ezekiel**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ezekiel\\_by\\_Michelangelo,\\_restored\\_-\\_large.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ezekiel_by_Michelangelo,_restored_-_large.jpg)

**Fig 3.3.5 Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones**

Artist: Paul Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

Original in black and white; color tint added.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:127.Ezekiel's\\_Vision\\_of\\_the\\_Valley\\_of\\_Dry\\_Bones.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:127.Ezekiel's_Vision_of_the_Valley_of_Dry_Bones.jpg)

**Fig 3.4.1 The Prophet Daniel**

Artist: Michelangelo (1475-1564)

A fresco at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel\\_\(Michelangelo\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel_(Michelangelo).jpg)

**Fig 3.4.2 The Statue in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

CC BY NC ND 4.0 International License by Revelation TV

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/nebuchadnezzars-dream/>

**Fig 3.4.3 Nebuchadnezzar Acknowledges Daniel's God as the True God**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration from *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Four, 1927, p. 116.

**Fig 3.4.4 Daniel's Friends in the Fiery Furnace**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.4.5 Belshazzar's Feast**

Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn (1606-1669)

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/rembrandt/belshazzar-s-feast-1635>

**Fig 3.4.6 The Nabonidus Cylinder**

Photo by Marco Prins and Jona Lendering

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nabonidus\\_cylinder\\_sippar\\_bml.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nabonidus_cylinder_sippar_bml.jpg)

**Fig 3.4.7 Daniel in the Lions' Den**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: Mrs. C. D. Francis, *The Children's Book of Old Testament Story*, 1913, p.164

**Fig 3.4.8 Daniel at Prayer**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

An illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book One, 1925, p. 97

**Fig 3.4.9 Susanna and the Elders**

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

Photo by City & County of Swansea: Glynn Vivian Art Gallery Collection

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/susanna-and-the-elders-227206>

**Fig 3.4.10 Daniel Proves Susanna Innocent**

Artist: Francois Pascal Simon Gerard (1770-1837)

<https://www.meisterdrucke.fr/fine-art-prints/Francois-Pascal-Simon-Gerard/828508/Daniel-prouve-l&39;innocence-de-Susanna.html>

**Fig 3.4.11 The Idol Bel**

Artist: Evelyn Paul

Frontispiece of book: *Myths & Legends of Babylonia & Assyria* by Lewis Spence F.R.A.I., 1916

<https://archive.org/details/mythslegendsofba1916spen/page/n7/mode/2up>

**Fig 3.4.12 Daniel Feeds and Kills the Dragon**

Artist: Jacob Willemsz de Wet or Wett (1632-1675)

<https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/Jacob-Willemsz-de-Wet-or-Wett/109076/Daniel-Killing-the-Dragon-of-Baal-.html>

**Fig 3.4.13 The Angel Takes Habakkuk by the Hair to Bring Food to Daniel**

Artist: Jacopo Guarana (1720-1808)

<https://www.artbible.info/art/large/731.html>

**Fig 3.5.1 The Return of the Exiles**

Artist: William Brassey Hole (1846-1917)

<https://biblepicturestories.wordpress.com/2017/09/28/phillip-medhursts-bible-in-pictures-105-the-return-of-the-exiles/>

**Fig 3.5.2 Model of the Second Temple**

Model in the Israel Museum, by Ariely. CC BY 3.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Second\\_Temple.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Second_Temple.jpg)

**Fig 3.5.3 Ezra with the Gold Vessels**

From a bible card published by Providence Lithograph Co., 1905.

**Fig 3.5.4 Nehemiah Rebuilds Jerusalem's Walls**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.5.5 Queen Esther**

Artist: Hugues Merle (1823-1881)

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2020/19th-century-european-art-2/hugues-merle-queen-esther>

**Fig 3.5.6 Esther before the King**

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637568800625>

**Fig 3.5.7 Esther Denounces Haman**

Artist: Ernest Normand (1857-1923)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Esther\\_Denouncing\\_Haman.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Esther_Denouncing_Haman.jpg)

**Fig 3.6.1 The Martyrdom of Eleazar**

Artist: Giovanni Battista Lenardi (1656-1704)

<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-1849474>

**Fig 3.6.2 Martyrdom of a Mother and Her Seven Sons**

Artist: Antonio Ciseri (1821-1891)

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/martyrdom-of-the-seven-maccabees-antonio-ciseri.html>

**Fig 3.6.3 Judas Maccabeus Enters Jerusalem and Cleanses the Temple**

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Woodcut engraving for *Die Bibel in Bildern*, 1860. Original black and white image; color tint added.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schnorr\\_von\\_Carolsfeld\\_Bibel\\_in\\_Bildern\\_1860\\_152.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_Bibel_in_Bildern_1860_152.png)

**Fig 3.6.4 Judas Maccabeus Prays for the Dead**

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter\\_Paul\\_Rubens\\_and\\_workshop\\_002.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens_and_workshop_002.jpg)

**Fig 3.6.5 Coin of Pompey the Great, ca 40 B.C.**

Original Image by Carlomorino, License CC BY-SA 3.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RSC\\_0017.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RSC_0017.jpg)

**Fig 3.6.6 Division of Herod the Great's Kingdom**

Map #102 from the *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

<http://gregoryblvdco.org/Bible%20Maps/039.jpg>